

THE INDEPENDENT

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INSIDE TODAY'S NEW-LOOK SECTION TWO

Complete guide to the weekend and beyond
20-page pull-out section

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The Passion for food: a tale for Easter
Cover Story

Germans hit hopes of end to beef ban

Abattoir standards condemned

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

As Germany yesterday dashed hopes of an early end to the beef crisis, Labour accused the Government of complacency in failing to maintain standards in slaughterhouses.

Jochen Borchert, the German minister of agriculture, declared in a German radio interview: "Nobody seriously expects the ban to be lifted in six weeks' time." At the same time, Douglas Hogg, the embattled Minister of Agriculture, admitted that he, too, did not know when it would be halted.

Mr Hogg said by senior Whitehall sources to have the full backing of the Prime Minister despite speculation about his future - admitted he could not "put a timetable" on the ending of the ban. "My business is not to arouse expectations which I cannot fulfil," he said.

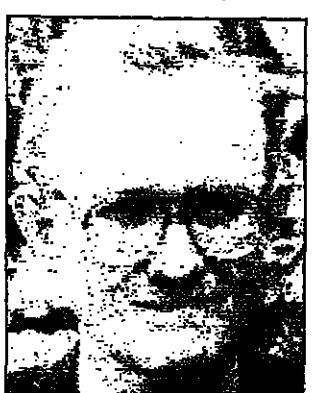
Mr Borchert's bleak prediction came as Labour renewed its assault on the Government by releasing figures which it claimed showed a consistent failure to "regulate and enforce" high meat standards in slaughterhouses.

The party accused ministers of "complacency" after obtaining official figures from November 1994 showing 30 per cent of slaughterhouses in England and Wales scored less than 50 out of 100 points for meat hygiene standards. Altogether 80 per cent scored less than 70 under the hygiene assessment system, while only 1 per cent were awarded more than 90.

Labour also highlighted an independent report from 1993 which warned that some slaughterhouses should have been

closed down many years earlier on public health grounds. And it said that the Government's own figures demonstrated in the autumn of 1995 that 48 per cent of slaughterhouses were failing to meet its specified bovine offal regulations introduced in 1989.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) said that while many breaches of regulations had been minor there had been some serious cases. But the ministry had al-



Hogg: 'EU being unrealistic'

ready taken steps to ensure more stringent enforcement and the latest audit - this February - found only 6 per cent of slaughterhouses failing to meet SBO regulations.

Mr Hogg, who used last week's meeting of EU agriculture ministers in Luxembourg to explain Britain's proposals for a £3bn cull of 4 million older cattle, said the EU ministers had unrealistic expectations of what measures the UK could take.

Some Whitehall sources suggested privately yesterday that the German government's attempts to sustain the EU ban

over a longer period was partly to strengthen the hand of German provincial governments which face action in the European Court of Justice from British meat traders over bans on British beef last year.

Mr Hogg said on Radio 4's *World at One* that he had offered confidence-building measures beyond those that were recommended by the Government's scientific advisers. "I think they had unbiased expectations as to what one can do. There was constant talk, for example, of eradicating BSE in a very short period of time as a condition of lifting the ban. Now that is simply not possible."

Under repeated questioning he at first tried to laugh off suggestions he may resign. Pressed further he said: "Obviously I am doing my job as best I can... If people come to a different solution, so be it. That's life."

Harriet Harman, Labour's spokeswoman on health, said action to improve standards in abattoirs was now essential if confidence in beef was to be restored. "While public confidence in British beef remains weak, the Government is still failing to act. The Government's concern not to regulate has left the consumer at risk and the meat industry vulnerable."

"Cleaner abattoirs mean safer meat. Safer meat means consumer confidence at home and abroad."

The most encouraging sign for the Government was that Sainsbury's reported fresh beef sales in its supermarkets were 70 per cent up on last week. After a half-price promotion, sales for Tuesday and Wednesday were reportedly "steady" at 80 per cent of normal trading.

Rodin becomes a pavement artist



Auguste Rodin's statue of Balzac goes on display in the centre of Paris's Champs Elysée as part of an exhibition called "Les Champs de la Sculpture" which aims to put famous works of art on show along the road. Photograph: Reuters

Insurer tried to halt child abuse inquiry

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

A leading insurance company tried to prevent a council investigating one of Britain's worst child sex-abuse scandals, saying that it would be a "hostage to fortune" and a "dress-rehearsal" for claimants.

The behaviour of the Municipal Mutual insurer of Cwylid County Council, impinged on normal democratic procedures, according to the suppressed independent report into the abuse scandal at care homes in the county.

Exclusive extracts from the report seen by the *Independent* also show that fears by the Municipal Mutual of victims' legal actions helped to ensure that a full report of an earlier investigation into the abuse was never seen by elected councillors, and was confined to a very small group of senior personnel within Cwylid social services.

Cwylid, which was split into three councils last Monday, commissioned an independent inquiry panel led by former Derbyshire social services director, John Jillings, two years ago but capitulated to threats by the insurers, whose business is now handled by Zurich Mutual, that the county's insurance cover would be revoked if the report was published.

The latest insights into what is likely to rank as one of the most serious cover-ups of professional failure show that the insurers opposed the Jillings inquiry from the outset, while the Welsh Social Services Inspectorate failed to inspect a single Cwylid children's home for six years.

Councillors appointed the Jillings team in response to fears that a paedophile ring had taken hold in children's homes over a 20-year period of abuse.

The panel unearthed disciplinary proceedings against 51 care staff going back to 1974 and 13 convictions, and described the abuse of children as "frankly appalling". But in February 1994 the insurers wrote to Cwylid's

county secretary saying that the inquiry would be "a hostage to fortune... Every inquiry is a further dress-rehearsal for claimants and a further incentive to the 'bandwagon syndrome'."

The report says that the interests of the insurers "impinged on the established democratic and constitutional arrangements of England and Wales."

The 1990 conviction of Stephen Norris, officer in charge at Carrefre children's home, for indecently assaulting three boys was one of the first outward signs of a much wider abuse regime, but usual procedures do not appear to have been followed.

Since Norris - later convicted of bugging boys at the Bryn Estyn home - had worked for the council for nearly 20 years, his past contacts with children came up for review. But on the insistence of Municipal Mutual, the inter-agency Area Child Protection Committee was only ever allowed to see a 10-page synopsis of a critical report it had commissioned outside experts to carry out. The social services committee was also confined to receiving the summary.

The explanation was that some matters were *sub judice* because of an ongoing police inquiry, but the Jillings investigation reports a letter from the county solicitor saying: "In addition, the... insurers indicated that the county council could in certain circumstances invalidate its insurance cover."

Social-work experts said yesterday that no investigator would wish to prejudice criminal prosecutions, but that the way reports were written rarely raised that kind of risk. It was also "highly unusual", according to one social-work inspector, for relevant councillors not to receive a full report.

'Unabomber' raid ends longest manhunt



Theodore "Ted" Kaczynski: A device was found in his cabin

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Theodore "Ted" Kaczynski, the former Harvard graduate and University of California mathematics professor suspected of being America's deadly "Unabomber", was yesterday indicted on a first formal charge by federal prosecutors in Montana.

According to FBI officials, the man they believe carried out an 18-year campaign of letter-bombings across the country, was being indicted in the courthouse at the state capital of Helena on a single count of possessing a bomb. The device

was apparently discovered by investigators as they searched Mr Kaczynski's remote cabin near the small town of Lincoln on Wednesday afternoon.

The charge means that Mr Kaczynski, detained when he tried to prevent the search, can continue to be held in custody while further evidence is amassed at the cabin - evidence the FBI hopes will conclusively identify him as the Unabomber, responsible for killing three people and wounding 23 others in 16 separate attacks, the first of them in May, 1978.

Although long years of failure have taught the authorities to be cautious, they finally believe they have caught their man. The examination of the cabin where Kaczynski lived a hermit's existence without electricity or running water could take several days - not least because of fears of booby traps. But the FBI has reportedly already found chemicals and bomb diagrams, as well as the partially prepared bomb.

Kaczynski was not formally arrested when he was taken into custody on Wednesday afternoon, grim-faced and bearded, his hair dishevelled and dressed in a torn black shirt and black jeans gashed at the knees.

For several weeks, federal agents had kept his ramshackle home under surveillance. The decisive break in the case seems to have come from tips from family members, especially David Kaczynski, who noticed similarities between some of his brother Theodore's earlier writings and published material from the Unabomber.

The manhunt which may now have climaxed has been the longest and most expensive in the FBI's history, led by a permanent 40-man task-force based in San Francisco. Over the years of the investigation, 200 people were briefly detained before being released.

But Mr Kaczynski is by far the strongest suspect so far unearthed. Apart from the physical evidence reportedly discovered at his cabin, he fits the FBI's psychological profile perfectly. Just as the FBI's psychological portrait of their quarry suggested, he is a white male, well-educated, meticulous and deeply antisocial.

Mr Kaczynski lived as a recluse in remote Montana for at least a decade, hardly known by his neighbours, who considered him a quiet and harmless eccentric. The Unabomber's attacks have taken place all over the country. The last two, both of which were fatal, occurred in New Jersey in December 1994, and in California in April 1995.

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IN BRIEF

Helping hands

Tesco has created 4,500 new jobs to provide teams of "customer assistants" to offer extra help in its 548 supermarkets. Page 5

Howard attacked

A chief constable has attacked Michael Howard's plan to jail more people. Page 2

Death row plea

A former British racehorse owner on Florida's death row has made a last-minute plea for a retrial. Page 3

Today's weather

Dry with sunny spells in most areas. Section two, page 21



Why it's a slow life even in the fast lane

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent
and ROB CRANE

For drivers across Britain this Easter, it will be a familiar scenario: sit in a jam for hours, only to find, when the traffic begins to move again, that there was no apparent reason for it.

Now, a super-computer produced by a team of scientists in Edinburgh has shown what causes inexplicable hold-ups: drivers who sit in the middle lane, and those who follow too closely behind the car in front, and have to brake abruptly.

"You'd be surprised at what people slow down for," said Mark Smith, marketing director for Quadstone, a spin-off company formed by the Edinburgh team. He said an aeroplane passing overhead, or an

accident on the other side of the road, can lead to a "shockwave" of braking, which travels back through the traffic queue, as drivers react to brake lights in front by braking themselves at up to 12 miles per hour. This means that five minutes after the event occurred, people a mile away are still slowing down.

When the traffic is heavy, that quickly leads to "flow breakdown", wherever the number of cars on the road is at a critical level - around a hundred cars passing any point every minute. The result: a traffic jam appears from nowhere. Bad lane discipline, such as middle lane hogging, makes it more likely, by reducing the road's capacity.

"On the M25, we found that in the four-lane section, when all are properly used, you can get 3,000 vehicles past a point

in an hour," said Dr Smith. "When you get everyone bunched into the outside lane, because there's an empty inside lane, a lorry in the second lane, and a car travelling at the same speed as the lorry in the third lane, the flow falls to 2,500 vehicles."

Their work, in a project called Paramics, at the university's Parallel Computing Centre, may lead to "traffic forecasts" that enable drivers to find out which roads will be busy, based on the traffic which is already on them.

Those setting off for Easter breaks may have been grateful for forecasts yesterday as big jams built up, with routes out of many big cities described as "a nightmare".

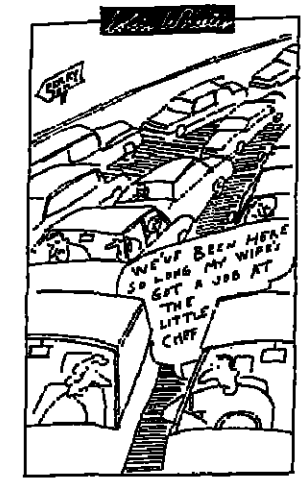
Motorists have been warned to expect long delays over the

weekend as holidaymakers are joined on the roads by people tempted out by good weather.

A spokesman for the RAC said yesterday: "There are certain points around the country where it really is horrendous. We're looking at some pretty bad delays." Routes out of London and in the West Midlands were particularly busy, as were all roads leading to airports and ports.

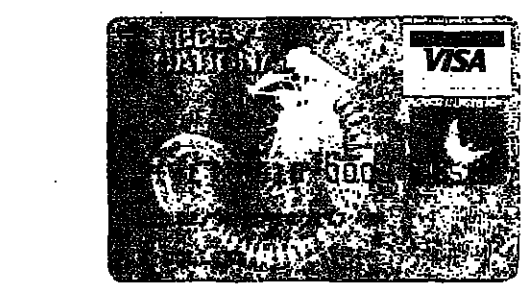
And an AA spokesman warned drivers to plan journeys to avoid bottlenecks. "It looks like the weather is going to be great, so the coast and many Easter events could well attract record crowds."

Forecasters predict it will remain sunny until tomorrow when it will become cloudier, although it should stay dry. About 1.5 million Britons will spend



the holiday abroad, with Heathrow yesterday handling 165,000 passengers. In all, 2 million passengers will pass through the airport by 13 April. Transport failure, page 4

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news

Top police chief joins attack on jail plans

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A senior police officer broke ranks yesterday and joined the Home Secretary's attack on the plans to build more men and women under sweeping sentencing reforms.

The Chief Constable of Humberside, Tony Leonard's surprise criticisms of Michael Howard's sweeping sentencing reforms, came as the new head of the Prison Service said that 25 new jails would be needed over the next 10 years - at an estimated cost of more than £6bn - to cope with the ex-

posed minimum sentences. The law should set maximum sentences and should trust the judiciary to implement sensible arrangements as to the length of the sentence.

It was a major embarrassment for Mr Howard. For - until yesterday - the police were the only professionals within the criminal justice system to have voiced support for the American-style mandatory sentences which have angered the judiciary, probation officers, the Bar and penal reform groups. Although some senior officers are known to share Mr Leonard's views, none have spoken out so publicly.

But Mr Howard sought to brush off the criticisms, insisting most police supported his plans and that the Government was already giving them extra resources.

"The money will be found. We are already giving more money to the police - we will have 5,000 more police officers in the next five years," he said. "A maximum sentence is not a sufficient deterrent. These views [Mr Leonard's] are not the views of the police generally and I am very pleased that my proposals are being supported by the people at the sharp end of the law."

Meanwhile, during a visit to Gartree Prison in Leicestershire, Richard Tilt, who has taken over the running of the Prison Service following the sacking of Derek Lewis, said the move would lead to a massive prison building programme.

"We need to build another 10 prisons to cope with the already expected rise in the prison population. We're looking at a programme that will include a total of 25 prisons over the next ten to 12 years," he said.

But Paul Cavadino, chair of the Penal Affairs Consortium, a group of organisations concerned with prisoners' welfare, said the number of jails needed could be even greater than the 25 envisaged by Mr Tilt.

The White Paper underestimated the new total of prisoners, firstly by exaggerating the deterrent effect of tougher sentences and secondly by assuming that judges would hand down shorter sentences under the new system.

He warned that the number of prisoners could rise by 30,000 rather than the 10,000 estimated by the White Paper.



Richard Tilt: Wants cash spent on crime prevention

sion in the prison population. Mr Leonard forced Mr Howard on to the defensive, when the Home Secretary was on a visit to Grimsby.

Mr Leonard - who was showing off his force's new high-speed pursuit car - called into question the whole basis of Mr Howard's sweeping sentencing reforms, outlined in Wednesday's White Paper.

Mr Leonard said the hundreds of millions of pounds the Government was planning to pour into a major prison-building programme would be better spent on crime prevention and questioned the minimum sentences for violent and sex offenders, and repeat burglars and drug dealers.

He said: "It's going to cost an awful lot of money in terms of building new prisons. I'd rather see that money ploughed into policing and preventing crime."

And he added: "I agree with the Lord Chief Justice in that I don't think Parliament should



On the hustings: Kenneth Clarke campaigning in Tamworth for the Staffordshire South East by-election

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Clarke pins poll hopes on tax cuts

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The return of the feelgood factor was forecast yesterday by Kenneth Clarke on the eve of the 1p-in-the-pound cuts in income-tax taking effect.

Campaigning in the Staffordshire South-East by-election, Mr Clarke said the Conservative candidate, Jimmy James, should be the "first beneficiary of the feelgood factor" from the tax cuts in the Budget which he estimated would benefit average families by £9 a week.

"It's a happy coincidence I am here the day before they get their tax reductions, which for family finances is probably the biggest benefit they have had so far," the Chancellor said. Clear-

ly in a bullish mood, he added: "I enjoy campaigning, particularly when everyone agrees the economy is doing extremely well and is going to get better."

"Businessmen tell me how much better things are. Campaigning this year, we are going to meet people who are benefiting in their family finances."

But his remarks could prove a hostage to fortune on Thursday when Labour's candidate, Brian Jenkins, leader of the local Tamworth Council, is poised to take the seat and reduce John Major's majority to one.

The Chancellor left the Conservatives open to the charge that it is his economic strategy which will be on test in the by-election in which the Tories are defending a majority of 7,182.

following the death of former Whip, Sir David Lighthorn. The Chancellor said that Tamworth was "the heart of the country. This is where our message is going to get home."

"It is the sort of place that ought to vote Conservative - you only need to look at Tamworth to see," he said.

The local Chamber of Commerce, in its quarterly report, said three in five firms were reporting an increase in order book levels with more than half of the firms saying growth was set to continue.

Mr Clarke said: "The general election could be as far away as next May. We have a long period in which the economy will continue to revive. I think Jimmy James in Tamworth should

be the beneficiary of the feelgood factor coming back into the Midlands."

But there was evidence around the Ankerside shopping centre he visited that the recovery is patchy.

He went to a jeans shop where he was told by Dawn Sedgwick, the manageress, that business was "stable".

"He said we were in blue so we must be voting Tory. I am voting Labour," she said.

Katherine Brown, owner of Ragtime, a children's clothes shop, said: "The real economy is lower now than it was during the recession. The public have no confidence to spend."

She said the National Lottery was partly to blame. "We get midweek shoppers - the baggy-

squad - who used to come out to pick up an outfit for £4.99. Now they buy scratch cards."

As the Chancellor toured the shopping centre, he encountered all the Government's problems - an anti-European housewife, a pensioner complaining about the lack of government help and a man who challenged Mr Clarke to admit taxes had gone up under the Tories.

Mr Clarke was also embarrassed by his own inflation when he refused to allow himself to be photographed having his tummy measured at the opening of an outside suit shop.

General election, 1992: Lightbrown, D (Con), 29,180; Jenkins, B (Lab), 21,988; Penlington, G (LibDem), 1,101; Taylor, J (SDP), 895; Con majority 7,182.

Easter message from IRA keeps strategic options open

DAVID McKITTRICK
Ireland correspondent

The intentions of the IRA remained shrouded in mystery yesterday, with political opinion sharply divided on the meaning of the organisation's Easter message to the republican faithful.

The statement contained an unqualified threat of violence in the future, but also said the IRA remained ready to help in developing the conditions which will allow for a meaningful negotiations process, free from preconditions of any kind.

The Ulster Unionist Party interpreted this as an indication that no new ceasefire is to be expected before 10 June, the date set for all-party talks. But the SDLP leader, John Hume, said he saw a chink of light in the mention of possible negotiations.

The IRA has carried out no attacks in Britain or Northern Ireland since the four London bombing incidents which followed the end of its 17-month ceasefire last month. While this is interpreted by some as a positive sign that the organisation is not intent on a full-scale resumption of violence, it seems unlikely that this stance will be continued indefinitely.

The general uncertainty was encapsulated by the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, who said: "It's very difficult to interpret or translate the situation, because we all live with the reality of an end to the cessation, and therefore one could hear on the next news broadcast reports of some IRA operation."

The signs are that even Sinn Féin, which once acknowledged itself as the IRA's political wing, has been cut out of the decision-

making loop. The general mood is Sinn Féin circles, largely as a result of this, is sombre and pessimistic.

Mr Hume's positive approach is based, he explained, on the IRA indication that it remained ready to develop conditions which would allow for meaningful negotiations. He said he and Mr Adams were engaged in intense activity to bring about a new ceasefire.

Given the amount of mistrust in the air, there is speculation that some of this activity could involve attempts to have the US government or others help guarantee that a ceasefire would lead to talks which were substantive rather than an attempt to pillory the republicans and merely to demand arms de-commissioning.

However, the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, said

Mr Hume was clutching at straws. He said Sinn Féin had one last chance to enter talks, but that during the period of the cessation they had reacted with endless provocation and finally with bombs.

His colleague, Ken Maginnis, added: "Sinn Féin are lost because they don't have an agenda that can be met through the democratic process."

They are beaten because they don't have a mandate. They will simply be an ugly boil on the landscape of politics for many years to come."

Figures from almost all parts of the Irish political landscape paid tribute yesterday to Ron Brown, the US Commerce Secretary who died in a plane crash in Croatia on Wednesday, for his role in the American initiative to increase investment in Northern Ireland.

IN BRIEF

Advice bureaux 'negligence' claim

Employment advice offered by Citizen's Advice Bureaux is potentially negligent or below standard in almost four in 10 cases, a leaked report shows. Redundancy cases, discrimination or job security and maternity leave are areas singled out for particular criticism.

Only 20 per cent of all advice was classified as "good", according to an external audit based on an examination of 319 cases taken from 16 bureaux. Details of the report, which was commissioned by the National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, are revealed in Legal Action - the monthly journal of the Legal Action Group.

PC in good nick

A 31-year-old police constable has been honoured for his outstanding devotion to public service after making 287 arrests in the past 11 months. Peter Hilton, who serves with the Greater Manchester force, has been commended by his Chief Constable, David Wilmoth.

Stabbing horror

A Briton has been stabbed to death in Australia in an attack described by detectives as "pointless and frenzied". The body of Gawan Whalley, 22, believed to be from Poole, Dorset, was found in a pool of blood on a pavement in a Sydney suburb. He arrived in the country in September on a working visa.

Girl's brain surgery

A schoolgirl has undergone emergency brain surgery after being attacked by another girl in the street. Donna Murgatroyd, 14, of Manchester Road, Bradford, was kicked and punched to the ground by the girl as she walked home from school last week. Donna, who initially went to hospital complaining of headaches, was last night in a "stable" condition at Leeds General Infirmary after surgeons removed two blood clots.

Cut-price funeral

A pensioner who campaigned for cheaper funerals yesterday had the cut-price send-off he had planned for years. Teddy Corbett-Winder, 79, a former Age Concern worker from Exeter, was cremated in the £67 chipboard coffin he bought seven years ago after criticising the prices charged by funeral firms.

Car sales down

Continued lack of consumer confidence drove new car sales down 0.87 per cent last month compared with March 1995, it has been announced. A total of 180,275 new cars were sold in March compared with 181,849 last year, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said. The fleet and company car sector rose 3.9 per cent last month, but private sales were 6.6 per cent down.

Louts in the frame

A police force has unveiled plans to shoot videos of children's loutish behaviour and play them back to their parents at the police station. Beat patrol officers will be armed with a video camera to film youngsters involved in street violence, graffiti and even littering in Gosport, Hampshire. Some video evidence may be used in court.

Travel bonus

Travel giant Thomas Cook is to give away £100 holiday spending money with every summer 1996 holiday booked from tomorrow until April 15. The deal - an attempt to kick-start the sluggish summer package market - applies to holidays departing between May 1 and September 30 to be taken by two adults staying at least five nights.

Labour poll history

Labour has made polling history by becoming the first party to enjoy such a massive lead over its rivals and sustain that lead for the longest period. A poll in today's Daily Telegraph shows that Labour continues to lead the Tories by roughly 30 points, a margin it has maintained since Tony Blair succeeded John Smith as leader in mid-1994.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Canada	£5.00	Italy	£5.00
Czech Rep.	£5.00	Japan	£5.00
Denmark	£5.00	Norway	£5.00
Finland	£5.00	Portugal	£5.00
Greece	£5.00	Spain	£5.00
Ireland	£5.00	Sweden	£5.00
Netherlands	£5.00	Switzerland	£5.00
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Skin patches 'can ease the baby blues'

Skin patches of the female hormone oestrogen can help women suffering from post-natal depression, new research has found.

A study showed that the patches, similar to the nicotine patches used by smokers, had a positive result in a group of 34 depressed women.

Dr John Studd, from Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, carried out research with colleagues from Salisbury in Wiltshire. He said he did not know why the patches worked, but the results were clear.

Oestrogen is a hormone formed mainly in the ovary and, in pregnant women, in the placenta. Of 64 women with major depression, 34 were treated with oestrogen patches for three months and 27 with an inert placebo for the same period of time. The depression experienced by the women was assessed monthly. By the end of the first month, the women receiving the oestrogen had shown a big improvement.

A research paper published in The Lancet today said the study had shown "that transdermal oestrogen is an effective treatment for post-natal depression".

Rail freight to slash workforce

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport correspondent

Up to half the 7,600 staff working for the four rail-freight companies bought by the US company, Wisconsin Central, are likely to lose their jobs over the coming six months.

North and South Railways, the Wisconsin subsidiary, which recently took over Loadhaul, Mainline Freight, Rail Express Systems and Transrail, announced yesterday it has written to all staff asking for volunteers for redundancy.

A spokesman said: "A package is on offer which will take into account people's age, current salary and years in service. All staff have received details of the scheme and will be given the opportunity to discuss their options over the coming weeks."

In announcing the scheme, the company said it wanted to make cost reductions in order to increase its share of the total British freight market.

The head of Wisconsin, Ed Birkhardt, is taking an aggressive attitude to freight and is determined to increase the market share from road, which is currently around 6 per cent.

Although the company refused to name a figure for job losses, Mr Birkhardt has already suggested more than 3,000 jobs could go when the companies are merged into one operation.

The three heavy-haul rail-freight companies were, in fact, de-merged by the Government only two years ago, in an effort to boost competition on the railways. But Mr Birkhardt's offer for £225m for all three persuaded the Government to sell them as one group. The four companies made profits of about £70m on a turnover of £620m in 1994/5. Job losses were inevitable, given the merger of the three companies together with Res, which runs the mail trains and the Royal train.

Unions believe that as many as 4,000 jobs could go. A spokesman for RMT, which represents most railworkers apart from drivers and white-collar staff, said: "We are concerned that the job losses envisaged do not square with the company's declared strategy of growth. We shall continue with our talks with the company. Our policy has always been that there should be no compulsory redundancies."

Going from platform 4 to eternity

JOJO MOYES

Old sailors get sprinkled onto the waves, while proud gardeners end up fertilising their rose bushes. Where better for the trainspotter to end his final journey than pulled into the sidings?

Fans of coal and steam and ardent followers of number plates may soon be able to enter the big sleep by sleeper, as plans are being drawn up for Britain's first burial ground for railway buffs.

The organisation behind the plans, the Midland Railway Trust in Ripley, Derbyshire, aims to set up a trackside cemetery and hold wakes in its dining cars after the departed has departed from platform 4.

A planning application to change the use of a one-and-a-half-acre site at Golden Valley has been lodged with Amber Valley Borough Council and the borough council is due to discuss the plan later this month.

"The intention is to build a small station, adjacent to the burial site so that special trains will be able to stop there," said Alan Calladine, spokesman for the Midland Railway centre.

0171 536 6288

Human rights appeal: Racehorse owner facing electric chair asks for retrial in Florida court

Last hope for death row Briton

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A former leading British racehorse owner on Florida's death row yesterday made an eleventh-hour plea for a retrial in an attempt to prove his innocence. Geoffrey Robertson, QC, a leading London human rights lawyer, was given a special hearing before the state's Supreme Court, to argue that Krishna Maharaj's first trial was flawed and that there was now new evidence which cast doubt on his conviction.

Maharaj, now aged 57, has been on death row in a Florida jail - just a short drive from Disneyworld - for nearly 10 years. He was convicted of the assassination of two wealthy businessmen, Derrick Moo Young, 53, and his son Duane, 23, in a Miami Hotel room - both for-

mer associates. By the narrowest seven to five verdict, he was sentenced to death.

The case again focuses attention on American use of the electric chair after the execution last year of British-born Nick Ingram. But his lawyers say that unlike the case of Ingram, there exists real doubt about Maharaj's guilt, as well as grave concerns about the trial.

Maharaj has always maintained his innocence. He admitted that he was in the hotel that night, but claimed he was lured there by a man who failed to show up for the appointment.

Since his trial, however, it has emerged that the company which insured the two dead men found they were probably the victims of a drug-related hit - and not because of any connection with Maharaj, who was then running a newspaper for



Krishna Maharaj (left), on death row for 10 years, whose last hope lies with appeal by Geoffrey Robertson (right)

the West Indian community in Miami.

His trial was beset by irreg-



ularities, particularly the arrest of the trial judge for allegedly taking bribes. His

lawyers say that evidence pointing to other suspects and away from Maharaj was wrongly withheld by the prosecution. They also maintain that as he was about to win a damages claim for breach of contract from the two men, so had no motive for the killing.

Yesterday Mr Robertson - a veteran of death row cases - told the judges that unless they ordered a retrial "the state of Florida will be responsible for taking the life of a man whose innocence was never fully tested". He said they had a duty under the UN Human Rights Convention to ensure that there was no room for doubt.

John Major has refused to intervene on Maharaj's behalf, but Mr Robertson was speaking with the support of more than 100 cross-party MPs and the Bar's human rights committee.

Maharaj - renowned in the world of horse racing - will now have to wait after the judges reserved their decision, but yesterday's hearing is regarded as his best hope of escaping the electric chair.

Born in Trinidad, Maharaj moved to Britain in 1960 and amassed a fortune importing fruit from the Caribbean. His passion was horse racing and he bought stables at Lambourn and Middleham, producing many winners. He moved to Florida in the mid-1980s.

None of his former racing friends believe he is capable of murder. But the US prosecutors claim he lured the Moo Youngs to the hotel and killed them, because of rivalries with another community newspaper.

The Supreme Court is likely to reach its decision within a month.

Fury as inquest finds no fault over toddler's death

PAUL FIELD

The parents of a 23-month-old child who died during surgery after being shuttled between four hospitals in eight hours yesterday vowed to sue a health authority for alleged negligence after an inquest jury returned a verdict of death by natural causes.

Robert Benton died of acute bronchiolitis which kills only 1 per cent of child sufferers, although he was operated on for a suspected blockage to the windpipe at Heartlands Hospital, east Birmingham.

As the coroner, Dr Richard Whittington, directed the jury to return a verdict of natural causes and not to pass blame, the boy's parents Julie Benton, 23, and Timothy Dawes, 32, stormed out of Birmingham Coroner's Court.

Inside, relatives hurled abuse at chest surgeon Joseph Khalil Marzouk, who performed the bronchoscopy. He sat expressionless as they turned on the jurors. "I hope your consciences are clear," yelled one.

Outside, Ms Benton, who is expecting her second child later this month, said: "I feel that the summing up was very one-sided. When he first suggested natural causes as the verdict I felt sick. I think there was more that could have been done. Robert had a chest infection but that was not life threatening. I feel he should still be here with us today."

She claimed the coroner had overlooked evidence from in-



Family grief: Julie Benton and Timothy Dawes outside court after hearing the verdict that their son died of natural causes. Photograph: Stuart Harrison

dependent surgeons and the pathologist who had disputed the treatment given to Robert.

Mr Marzouk said he died as a result of tracheo malacia, a birth defect which led to the collapse of his windpipe. However, pathologist Dr David Rushton said he had found no evidence of the rare congenital disorder despite three doctors in the operating theatre claiming they had identified the defect after discovering there was no foreign body or mucus blocking his trachea.

He said the post-mortem examination had shown that Robert died on 7 June last year of a double lung collapse caused

by acute bronchiolitis. He claimed that as a result of artificial ventilation during surgery his diseased lungs had probably torn under the pressure and led to his death.

An independent consultant anaesthetist, Dr Roger Thornington, criticised the surgeon for not having inserted a chest drain which would have removed gases from his body and possibly saved his life. Had the bronchial infection been diagnosed at an early stage, he suggested, Robert could have been treated with antibiotics and recovered in intensive care.

However, the coroner commented: "I do not think we will

ever be sure but the underlying cause of death was a naturally occurring infection."

"It would be naive to think that every death on the operating table is an accident or misadventure."

Summing up the three-day hearing, the coroner recalled how Robert was taken by his parents to Sandwell Hospital near their home in Rowley Regis, West Midlands, but they left after 10 minutes, concerned at the chaos they found in the casualty department.

They drove him 10 miles to Good Hope Hospital, Sutton Coldfield, where doctors diagnosed a suspected blockage

and organised a transfer to Birmingham Children's Hospital. On arrival, no beds were available so he was sent to Heartlands where he died during surgery, eight hours after first being taken to Sandwell.

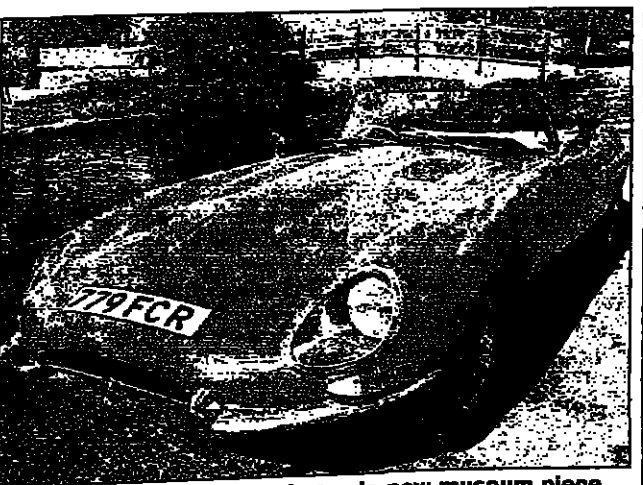
The coroner said he did not believe the delay in treatment had affected the outcome, and in view of the fact that hospitals in the region had tightened the protocol for the transfer of patients, he did not feel the need to make any recommendations.

Solicitor Stephanie Forman, representing the family, said the verdict would not deter them from pursuing a case for alleged negligence against the West

Midlands Regional Health Authority. "We feel we have every chance of winning and in addition we are going to instigate some form of inquiry into the findings of the inquest."

A statement on behalf of the four hospitals visited by Robert said: "Communications between hospitals were not clear and lack of clarity in communications is of serious concern to all the hospitals."

"New procedures have been put in hand. Now staff requesting a transfer are directed to contact a receiving hospital themselves to check that facilities are available before a transfer actually commences."



Classic art: The E-type - Jaguar's new museum piece

New York salutes E-type as art

New York yesterday honoured the classic E-type Jaguar by declaring the British sports car an official "work of art".

At the same time Jaguar unveiled a new open-top version to its classic 1960s model at the US city's motor show.

The British car maker chose New York to show off the new XK8 convertible because it expects seven in 10 of all models built to be sold in the US. The coupe version of the new car was given its public debut at last month's Geneva motor show.

Billed as the successor to the XJS but looking more like the famous E-type, the XK8 is expected to sell for just under £60,000 from October.

While motorists fans drooled over the new machine, an original E-type roadster went on permanent display alongside

paintings and sculptures at the New York Museum of Modern Art. It is only the third ever car to get such an honour - the others being a Ferrari Formula 1 racer and a Pininfarina Cistalia.

A spokeswoman for Jaguar said: "This is a great privilege to be honoured by the museum in this way as the new model was being unveiled in the city."

The E-type first went into production 35 years ago and the convertible version was also unveiled in New York.

Michael Dale, president of Jaguar Cars North America, said: "When Jaguar introduces an all-new sport car it is a significant event in the automotive world. To have the world debut of the XK8 convertible in New York underscores the importance of the North American market to Jaguar."

Inquiry as NHS manager gets £35,000 pay-off and new post

LOUISE JURY
and TONY HEATH

An investigation has been launched into how a manager was appointed to a £38,000 job in the NHS within days of receiving a £35,000 redundancy pay-off from a health service post just five miles away.

Rhodri Morgan, Labour's Welsh health spokesman, said yesterday that the case raised important questions about the future of the NHS including how the Conservatives' break-up of the service was costing the public money. "It cannot be right in law for somebody to leave a [health] trust in the NHS and pop up a week later in another NHS job having just collected a cheque," he said.

Julie Sharma left the Cwm-

bran-based Gwent Community Health Trust at the end of December with a redundancy award of £35,000 after her job as business development manager was axed in a re-organisation aimed at securing budget cuts of £250,000 a year.

Within days, she was appointed policy and performance director of the new Gwent Health Authority at Pontypool, five miles from her former office, at £38,000 a year. The post was advertised only in the NHS.

William Hague, Secretary of state for Wales, is now investigating after protests from the South Gwent Community Health Council, which represents patients, and Mr Morgan, MP for Cardiff West. The authority has ordered its own investigation and Mr Morgan has

also asked the Audit Commission to intervene.

Mrs Sharma's former employer, the Gwent Community Health Trust, which provides mental health, learning disability and community services for the county, claims it had no choice but to compensate her when her post was abolished.

Bob Hudson, the chief executive, said the authority and trust were independent employers. "If we make somebody redundant, we have obligations to them in law." The issue was a national one and had come to a head because the NHS re-organisation had created more employers, he said.

Mr Morgan said the situation was "patently absurd". Anyone continuing work in the NHS should not be awarded re-

dundancy. "The Government can't have it both ways. It says the trusts are within the NHS in which case they're not separate employers. There is only one occupational pension scheme for the service."

An additional factor in this case was the advertisement of the position internally. "Mrs Sharma was clearly not entitled to apply as an internal candidate if she had been made redundant from the NHS. But if she was still considered an NHS employee then she should not have been awarded severance pay."

Mr Hague, who has asked for a report on procedures, said in a written answer "a person who is no longer employed in the National Health Service would not be eligible for a job restricted to existing employees".

Lie detectors winkle out fishy tales

DANIEL ROSEMAN

Fishermen who claim a share of a £50,000 prize have been told that they must pass a lie detector test to check that they are not exaggerating.

The firm organising the contest, Normark Sports, imposed the rule after its insurers said that they were worried about tall stories in the search for the record catch of a predatory fish, using a plastic lure, between next June and December 1999. John

Mitchell, the managing director of the Devon-based company, said: "This is a safeguard for us but also a safeguard for winners."

"I would not want a legitimate claimant not to win, or to win a smaller amount of money, because of a fraudulent claim." But he was quick to stress that most anglers would not lie in order to win.

"I would emphasise that the vast majority of British anglers are completely honest," he said. Colin Scull, of the British

Record Fish Committee, agreed. "I have been involved in angling all my life and I do not think there is a more honourable bunch of people than anglers."

But some anglers are prone to exaggeration. In 1987, taxidermist Roy Whitehall was awarded the British record for a 43lb 12oz pike. But fraud was discovered when a man recognised the fish as one he had caught and sent for stuffing, which had been stretched. Mr

Whitehall still ended up a winner when the fake fish was sold for £4,200 at auction.

Another famous fraud involved a Swiss angler Jurgen Notzli, who in the Eighties bought huge fish and "caught" them in his garden pond.

Lie detectors are not new in fishing, though. A United States competition, the "Crappiethon", used them to test anglers claiming \$25,000 (£16,500) for catching fish specially marked with plastic tags.

The Government sale of Railtrack shares is underway. To register for information, you simply need to call one of the many banks, building societies, stockbrokers or other financial intermediaries offering a Share Shop service. Look out for the list with telephone numbers appearing in this paper. Once you have registered, your Share Shop will send you further information about Railtrack and the Offer.



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news

Childminder tragedy spurs call for reform

LOUISE JURY

Training and registration of childminders need to be improved to prevent a repetition of the death of Helen Sangar, the baby shaken to death by her minder, according to a report published yesterday.

The report calls on the Department of Health to issue tougher requirements for minders, including a training programme before they are placed on a local-authority register, and the keeping of an accident log-book for children in their care.

David Lane, a childcare consultant and the author of the report, recommended local authorities should allow funds for staff to offer support to childminders, but also called on parents to take a more active role in alerting social services to potential problems.

And he said if proper procedures had been in place nine

years ago, the unsuitability of baby-killer Susan Cawthorne might have been detected and the life of Helen Sangar saved.

While in Cawthorne's care in 1984, Leila Ipakchi, two, died of severe head injuries. A verdict of accidental death was recorded, and Cawthorne was allowed to remain on Sheffield city council's childminding register, although she had never been formally trained. Helen Sangar later died in her care.

Mr Lane said: "It is clear that a number of factors around the time of Leila's death could have led to a closer examination of events. In view of the state of knowledge and the systems then in operation, however, it is understandable that no action was taken at the time."

"Since then, systems have been improved and tightened up and if such events were to happen today there would be individuals who would be ac-

countable for taking the appropriate action."

The area child protection team in Sheffield, which ordered his report, has already implemented many of the recommendations. Martin Manby, social services director, said the childminders themselves had been anxious to make improvements although the service remained "critically dependent" on parents in day-to-day contact with childminders to register concerns.

However, Helen's parents, Andrew Sangar and Susan Alston, last night said the report did not go far enough and more had to be done.

"We believe that further procedural changes are necessary both in Sheffield and across the country if the risk of a similar tragedy occurring is to be significantly reduced," they said in a joint statement.

They called for unannounced

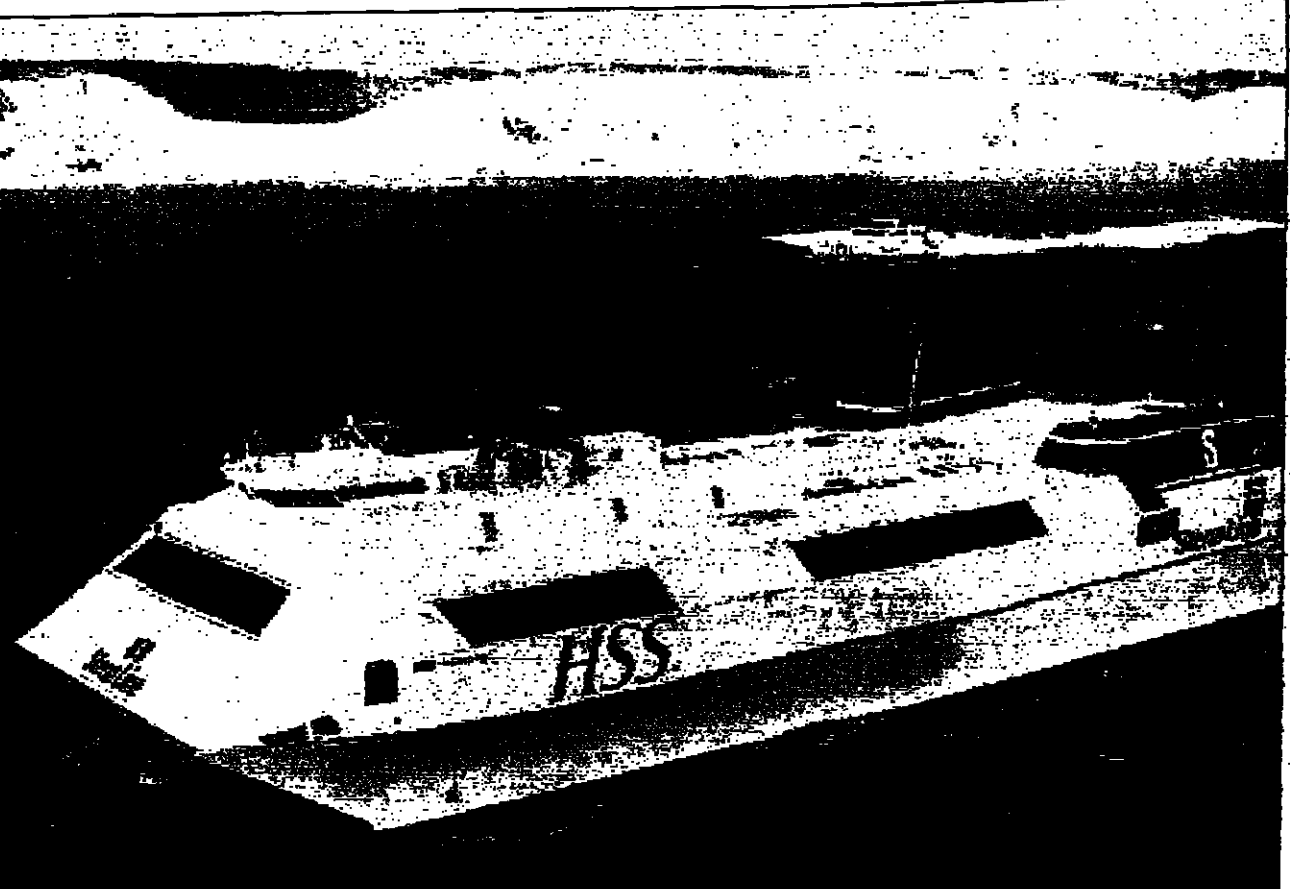
spot-checks on childminders and for all injuries requiring medical attention to be investigated. There should be a "greater willingness" to deregister childminders.

The couple also accused Mr Lane of "letting off" those who "in our view are guilty of failing to protect all Sheffield children in the care of childminders. If the correct actions had been taken, it would have led to the questioning of Mrs Cawthorne's suitability as a childminder, and so our daughter might still be with us."

Cawthorne, 43, was jailed for four years last year for manslaughter. Mr Sangar and Ms Alston are now considering whether legal action is possible following the report.

"We intend to continue to campaign to make childminding safer so that no other parents have to face the trauma we have been through," they said.

Easter traffic: Errors that will land millions in weekend jams



Slow start: The Stena HSS, the world's biggest high-speed ferry, due to enter service last month across the Irish Sea, has been further delayed after safety checks and will not carry passengers until after Easter. Photograph: PA

CBI anger at Tory transport policy failure

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

Business people are deeply "frustrated" and "angry" at the Government's failure to produce a transport policy, Adair Turner, director general of the CBI said yesterday.

Speaking at a lunch with transport experts at the CBI headquarters, he launched a fierce attack on the Government's failure to produce any response to the transport debate it launched 18 months ago. Mr Turner said: "There is deep frustration among business people that the Government has failed to produce any transport policy. Business confidence in the Government's resolve to develop a competitive and sustainable transport network in the UK is at a low ebb."

The sharpness of the attack will surprise ministers especially coming from one of its allies but it shows the depth of anger among business leaders over what they see as ministers failure to face "hard choices". Mr Turner said that while it was "all very well" to stimulate a debate on transport, it had started 18 months ago and the "past 15 months have been wasted". "Any further paralysis by analysis will simply not do."

The *Independent* revealed earlier this week that the Government's response to the transport debate is likely to be published early next month but will eschew any "grand solutions" to transport problems. It will also fail to satisfy environmentalists' demand for strict targets to reduce traffic growth.

Mr Turner said it was the Government's business to make hard choices. However, the transport debate had become overlaid with "a desire to reduce public expenditure for its own sake" which meant that it the Government had avoided developing a transport strategy.

Business leaders are beginning to accept that the infrastructure cannot be expected to accommodate all of this growth and therefore are looking at ways of breaking this link. They are sensitive to criticisms that goods are being transported all round the country when they could be sourced more locally but currently, despite annual price rises above the rate of inflation, fuel remains cheaper in real terms than in the oil crisis of the 1970s.

The CBI has moved away from its past emphasis on purely road-based solutions to the transport crisis in favour of encouraging public transport and other more environmentally friendly modes such as walking and cycling. Robert Napier, chief executive of Redland, the building supplies group, and chairman of the CBI's transport committee, said: "We accept that we can't build eight-lane motorways in England's green and pleasant valleys. But it may be necessary to build the motorways underneath them sometimes, even if this costs more."

The CBI is also angered that the Government's response to the transport debate will ignore calls for a reform of the road taxation system. Mr Turner accepted that road pricing was not popular but said that a distinction should be made between road charging - for the cost of wear and tear - and taxation.

Mr Napier said that the CBI was currently working on an estimate of how much needed to be spent annually on transport infrastructure in order to keep Britain moving: "We feel that around £9bn per year needs to be spent on transport investment, about £2bn more than at present."

He added: "This weekend's Bank Holiday traffic will highlight once again the historic failure of UK transport policy."

Food sent on road odyssey

ROS WYNNE-JONES

The distance travelled by foods in heavy lorries around Britain has increased by just over half in the last 15 years, according to the campaign group Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment Alliance.

While industry chiefs argue that Britain needs better and more roads to maximise the efficiency of freight transport, SAFE want to see supermarket chains sourcing their products locally to cut down the number of "food miles" travelled by heavy goods vehicles. The umbrella group's research highlights the following cases:

■ **Asparagus:** At a supermarket in the Vale of Evesham, Hereford and Worcester, Britain's main asparagus-growing region, asparagus had been imported 2,000 miles from Spain at the height of the season.

■ **Apples:** The United Kingdom is the second largest importer in apples in the world, even though apples are available in the country most of the year round. Apples are imported 14,000 miles from New Zealand, 3,300 miles from the United States and 5,200 miles from South Africa. The UK is only 35 per cent self-sufficient

in apples, while in France 90 per cent of apples sold are French.

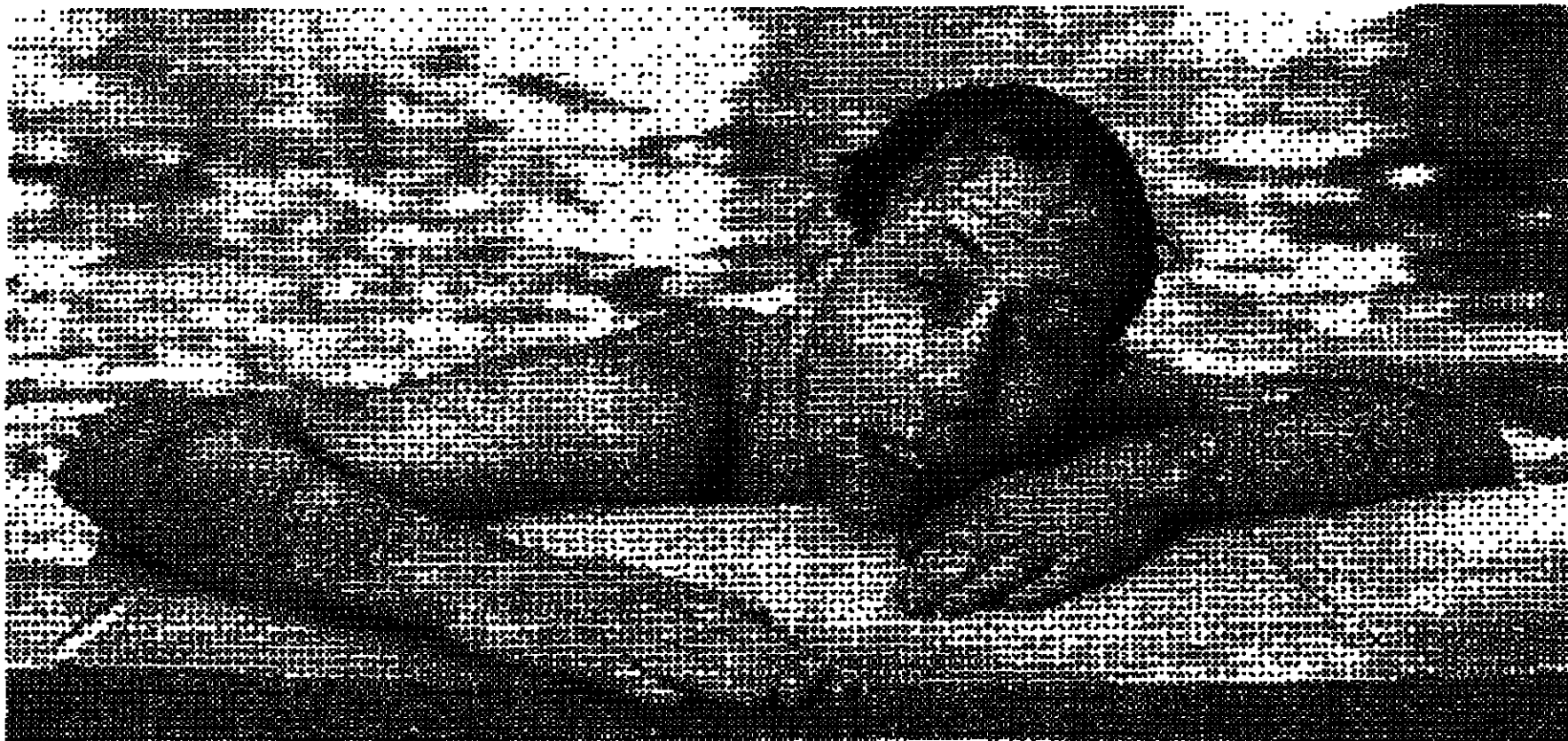
■ **KiwiKat:** A British supermarket chain was found to buy its KiwiKat bars in France and road freight them to the UK, while a French supermarket chain bought Mars Bars from Slough, Berkshire, although they were also produced in France. Transport costs were lower than the difference in price of the products between the two countries.

■ **Milk:** Fresh milk from a dairy near the south coast of England was found being sold in the north of Scotland.

■ **Tomatoes:** A Lancaster firm collected tomatoes from Pilling, Lancashire, and transported them to Lancaster. They were then road-freighted to Blackpool for distribution to Dewhurst the butchers at their Yorkshire depot. From there they went by road to all Dewhurst shops, including Lancaster.

■ **Fruit and salads:** A company operating a distributing centre in Spalding, Lincolnshire, was importing bananas through Southampton, which were then sent to Bolton, Lancashire, where they were taken to Bridgewater, Somerset, to go to retail distribution centres and wholesalers throughout England and Wales.

Congratulations on swimming fifty thousand miles.



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ChildLine. Not to mention the five UK charities promoting sport for schools and the disabled who will also benefit. So a massive thank you to the sponsors, swimmers (all 30,000 of you), and our supporters at Unilever, edisys and Intersport, for making it the biggest, most successful Swimathon ever. You've all deserved a hard-earned rest. Until next year.

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Packers the new store war weapon

The supermarket giant Tesco yesterday announced that it had created 4,500 new jobs — to provide special teams of "customer assistants" to offer extra help in its 548 stores across the country.

The scheme was launched on one of the busiest days of the year for supermarkets, as Tesco's chairman, Sir Ian MacLaurin, led more than 1,000 office staff who had volunteered to spend a day helping customers.

The office workers were temporarily joining the new teams of customer assistants, identifiable by blue waistcoats, who have had been trained "to use their initiative to help out customers at every stage of their shopping trips".

A Tesco spokeswoman said: "The 4,500 are all new jobs. It follows a trial in nine stores. The scheme is costing £20m this year, but prices will not go up to pay for it because it is part of our budget."

"The customer assistants will unload trolleys, pack bags, find forgotten items or replace damaged goods, take note of any questions or ideas, and act as a personal point-of-contact for customers."

Sir Ian said that he was helping shoppers at the company's store at Brent Cross, north-west London, and that his board colleagues were at other stores — but, unlike the customer assistants, they were there for one day only.

Meanwhile, rival supermarkets yesterday responded to Tesco's move by revealing their commitment to new jobs.

Asda said that it had created 5,000 new jobs and increased the speed of its check-out operation by 15 per cent in the past year.

"Service is not something to be advertised," said Gwyn Burr, Asda's marketing director. "It

is not just a matter of training manuals, it is something customers experience in our stores and either you like it or you don't," she added.

Sainsbury said that its increase in the number of staff hours in-store was the equivalent of more than 5,000 extra staff. And Sainsbury responded to Tesco's jobs initiative by claiming that it was "already doing it".

"Service is something Sainsbury staff have been giving for years," Roger Ramsden, director of brand marketing, said.

Safeway, which has 370 stores throughout the United Kingdom, launched its customer reward card in November 1993 to encourage shoppers' loyalty.

Shoppers could soon be able to pick up a Tessa at Tesco or an investment savings scheme at Safeway as the high-street chains compete to become Britain's first financial supermarket, according to a new report out yesterday.

The groups are poised to cash in on existing successful customer loyalty promotions by extending them into the financial products field. And they could benefit from the reluctance of consumers to buy insurance products from their bank or building society, according to the market researchers Mintel. Its survey found that fewer than one in three adults would buy an insurance product from their bank or building society and that the majority preferred to shop around.

The report says a number of large retail outlets have already moved into financial services over the last 10 years. It cites Marks & Spencer and Virgin as prime examples of retailers who have exploited the opportunities open to them and says that the next step may be tie-ups or takeovers of life assurance companies by retailers.

First Internet channel to come with own soap

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

The world's first Internet channel, boasting a schedule of programmes similar to those on television, is to be launched in Britain next month.

The project is being pioneered by the Cyberia Cafe chain, the London-based computer cafe group that serves coffee, on-line access and technical help to anyone who wants to surf the Net.

Channel Cyberia, as it is called, is not unlike Channel 4 in that it offers a host channel filled by "programmes" made by independent producers. It will also mirror conventional channels in that it plans to publish programme listings and even use ITN to provide news.

Also on offer will be a financial news service, a sports slot, film reviews, and a motoring feature by Steve McFadden — who plays the garage owner Phil Mitchell in *EastEnders*.

It will even launch with a visual soap opera called *Outsiders*, with every scene available from the point of view of each character. With little dialogue, it will be text-based but with cartoon and photography elements

— like reading a novel. *Outsiders* will have two episodes a week with a weekend omnibus.

Similarly to ITV and Channel 4, the Internet channel staffed by eight people will offer advertisements — but these will be played only on request. When the advertisement's logo is clicked it will play.

Keith Teare, controller of Channel Cyberia, said the concept would introduce the notion of time to the Internet because the "programmes" would go out at set times, just as on television.

However, in other ways the new channel would be more like a magazine at first because it would be restricted to text, photography and graphics with minimal audio-visual content.

Cyberia expects to be able to deliver CD-Rom quality material on-line within months and improve on sound and moving pictures by the end of the year.

The channel began a preview service this week on <http://channel.cyberiacafe.net/>. It will launch on 22 May at the Internet World Conference in London and hopes to attract over 2 million viewers within three years. It expects to be in profit by August, anticipating initial advertising revenue of £50,000 a month rising to £2m next year.

Inquiry into army meningitis deaths

Health experts are investigating possible links between the deaths of two babies from meningitis at an army garrison.

An 11-week-old boy died from meningococcal septicaemia at the Duchess of Kent Military Hospital in Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, on Monday.

Jessica Murdoch, 16 months, died from the same infection in February.

Both fathers are believed to be soldiers in the Royal Irish Regiment but they do not know each other.

Tests are being conducted to

establish whether the strains in the two cases are similar and if the deaths are linked.

Dr Phil Kirby, communicable disease consultant for North Yorkshire Health Authority, said: "It is unbelievably tragic for these two families."

"Almost all cases of meningococcal infection are single and isolated, and spread from person to person is rare, even in families or in those having close contact with someone with the disease."

National and regional meningitis specialists have been briefed about the deaths.



Soul concern: The Catholic Women's Network washing feet outside St David's Cathedral Photograph: Rob Stratton

Catholic women say male ritual does not wash

Women singing hymns yesterday protested outside an Easter church ceremony which washes the feet of men only.

Supporters of the Catholic Women's Network accused leading Roman Catholic clergy in Wales of being sexist.

The demonstration was mounted at St David's Cathedral, Cardiff, shortly before Archbishop Aloysius Ward washed the feet of 12 men in the congregation in the tradition of the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.

Surprised worshippers arrived for the service to find a large banner outside the cathedral proclaiming "Wash Women's Feet Too".

As the Archbishop continued with his service inside, 30 women held their own ritual outside on the pavement, producing a wooden chair, a bowl and jug of water. Earlier they handed out leaflets and tried to

argue their case with clergy arriving for the service. Several priests avoided the protest by using a side entrance.

Sheila McBride, of South Shields, who travelled to Wales for the pavement service, said most Catholic dioceses were more enlightened and chose to include women members in the ceremony. "I think it is terrible to exclude women like this and it completely changes the meaning. Washing of feet is supposed to be a symbol of service to others, love and unity."

Ann Farr, spokeswoman for the Network, was among those who had her feet washed outside the cathedral. "To exclude women turns the whole Maundy Thursday tradition into a symbol of exclusion and division," she said.

Father John Lloyd denied the service ignored the role of women. "The diocese is simply following Vatican instructions."

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Housing revival: Lowest interest rates for 30 years and belief that costs have bottomed out have rebuilt market confidence

Estate agents toast 'feel-better factor'

REBECCA FOWLER
and ROB CRANE

They are calling it the 'feeling better factor'. As estate agents across Britain took on extra staff this weekend in anticipation of an Easter influx, they declared it was finally spring-time for the housing market.

The first quarter of 1996 has seen an average 1.3 per cent rise in house prices and an increase in sales, against the lowest interest rate in 30 years. The front-runners in the recovery are south-east England, the West Midlands and London.

A study by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) reveals that two-thirds of English and Welsh estate agents have had a 10 per cent increase in viewing and valuation requests this year. They are struggling to find enough properties for sale to supply the renewed demand.

In Manchester this weekend, estate agents were confident of further signs of life. "The months from Easter are when you traditionally expect to fill the 'sales pending' drawers," said Jonathan Dines, an agent and surveyor.

He added: "The weather is good, there are a lot more offers and, we'd hope, a lot more sales. This is the turning-point weekend, when people put the kids in the back of the car, drive to the areas they are interested in, note down the numbers on the For Sale boards, and visit agents."

The intense competition between lending institutions, aimed most intensely at first-time buyers, combined with the record low interest rates, have finally started to eclipse the financial insecurities of buyers, according to the industry.

Harvey Williams, national housing spokesman for the RICS, said: "From April we are seeing all the financial benefits coming out of the mortgage mill at last. We are seeing tax savings coming into the purchasers' pockets, on top of the ferocious competition to lend them money. The first thing many people will do is consider the roof over their head."

Despite the optimism, agents are anxious to stress that the market is still fragile. In Hythe, Southampton, Paul Dettner, a partner in an independent agency, described it as a "convalescence period".

Mr Dettner said: "Things are getting better, but if someone has a major operation you don't expect them to get up afterwards and run a marathon."

People assume someone is going to flick a switch and we will be back to a normal market, but it takes longer than that."

However, economists are convinced the confidence from Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, is not unfounded. While interest rates have been cut three times in the last five months, and taxation dropped this month, consumer confidence has been building.

Ian Shepherdson, UK economist for HSBC Markets, said: "It's blindingly obvious the market is recovering, from higher mortgage applications, more sales and a move in prices. The question now is how long it lasts."

He added: "We have seen a rebound from 1995; what we haven't seen yet is real progress. Our view is we will, but it's not a boom because the consumer balance sheet has too much debt on it."

"There simply isn't the scope to push house prices up by much more than five per cent. But what we'll have is a deeper market that will be stronger."

Among the areas already seeing the greatest signs of renewal is Croydon. Bob Hay, a partner in Streets Ahead, said the firm was struggling to satisfy the demands of a pent-up

market, but said sales were up 25 per cent on the same quarter last year.

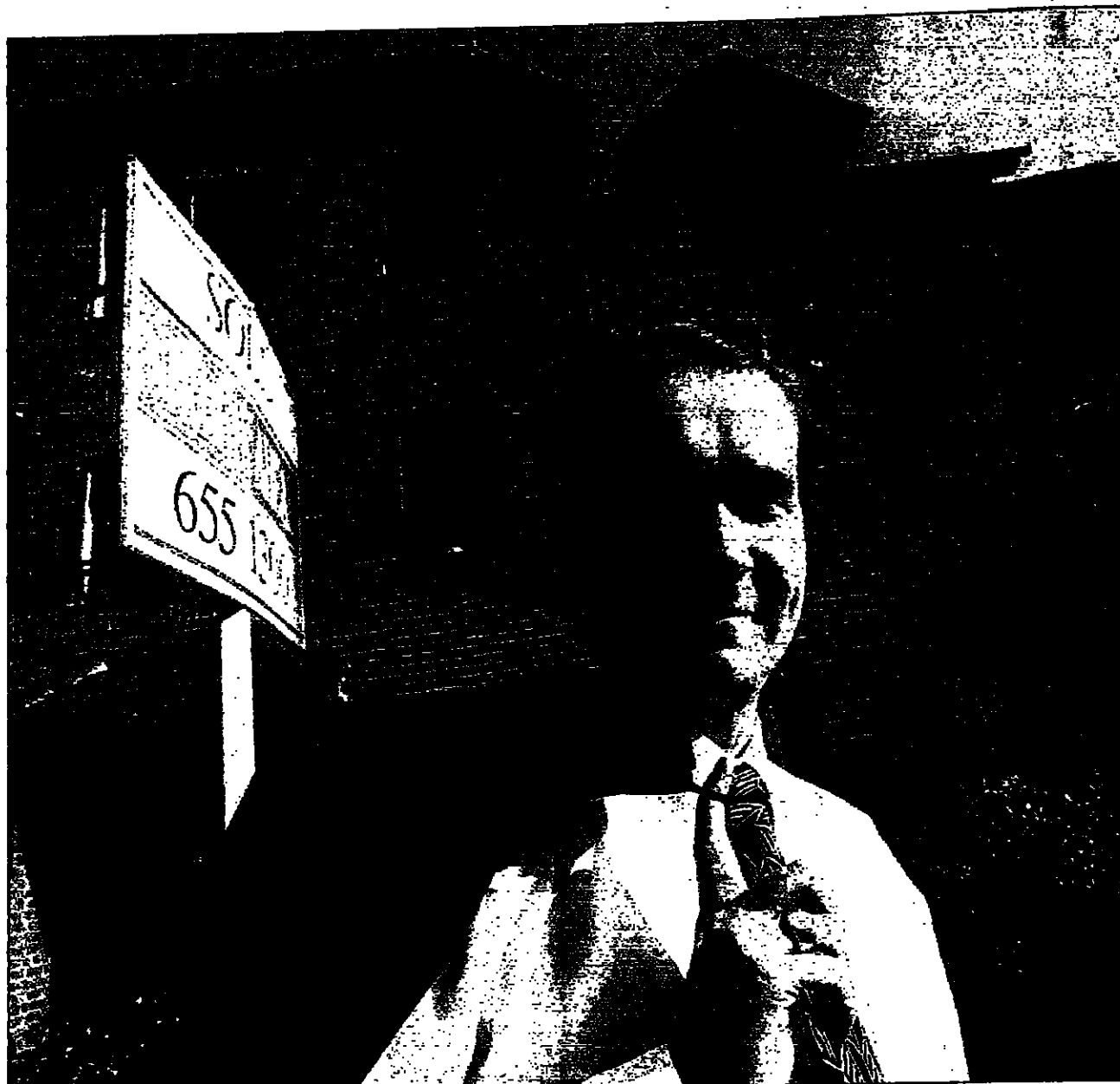
Mr Hay said: "We are seeing both first-time buyers and buyers who want to move up a level from a two-bedroom house. That's where the shortage is, in the three- and four-bedroom houses for the mid-£100,000s. A lot of people who want to move up a level don't have anything to go and see."

It is a similar picture in Scotland. Homeowners in Aberdeen are gradually building up the confidence to put their properties on the market, having seen prices drop to record lows, and an invigorated interest from buyers.

Ken Anderson, director of Anderson Pitt and Co, said: "Flats are selling very healthily, but the market is short of three-bedroom traditional homes. I'd like to see more of those coming up for sale."

The lending institutions are already considering reviewing their forecasts for 1996 in the light of the renewed demand.

The Halifax, the largest building society, has predicted an overall rise of 2 per cent in house prices for 1996, but said if the current recovery is sustained it will be "somewhat higher".



Home sweet home: Oliver Gill outside the flat in Croydon which he is considering buying. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

'Prices are not going to drop'

Rebecca Fowler reports on the two sides it takes to clinch a property deal

Oliver Gill is an estate agent's dream: he is a first-time buyer, with £20,000 of savings in the bank, and his eye on three-bedroom flats in Croydon, which is among the areas that have seen the greatest recovery in the market.

But Mr Gill, a salesman of hairdressing products, has bid his time until this year. He watched prices continue to drop alongside interest rates, which have fallen to record levels since November, and he has witnessed the lending institutions clamouring for custom.

"I've been one of the greedy ones. I've watched everything go down and down. I thought I'd sit on what I had, a hefty deposit, and pick my moment. Now there are these magnificent mortgage deals where you can play them off against each other, and it's clear the prices are not going to drop any further, if anything they're perking up."

When he started looking seriously for a property at the

THE BUYER

beginning of the year, Mr Gill said the flats he saw were disappointing. But in recent weeks he says the quality in his price range, £50,000, has improved significantly and he is currently considering putting an offer on a flat he saw this week.

He said: "To begin with I was going to start at the bottom with a £30,000 flat, but it's all dross, and by going up one level you get a lot more for your money."

Like many first-time buyers, Mr Gill, who has rented since he was 16, was concerned about financial security during the recession. But under the current mortgage deals, he estimates he will be paying as little as £200 a month.

Mr Gill said: "Everyone always thinks about security, but even in the worst-case scenario, with the mortgage deals as good as they are, I could still afford to live there. People's confidence is definitely coming back."

'It just felt like time was right'

For eight years Trisha Templeton, 48, a personnel officer, and her husband dreamed of moving from Croydon to a home closer to his work. But only this year did they feel confident enough to put their house on the market.

Although the Templetons bought their three-bedroom house a decade ago, just before the 1980s boom that left an army of homeowners floundering in negative equity, they watched the market plummet to desperate levels and kept postponing the move.

Mrs Templeton said: "We'd been thinking about it for years, but my husband is a self-employed management consultant, and for one reason or another we thought we should wait, then we decided we couldn't wait forever."

They put their £81,000 house on the market at the beginning of the year and within three days they had a buyer. But the couple who put an offer in were trapped in negative equity and then had the house they were

THE SELLER

selling down-valued again, in a final legacy of the great slump.

However, a second buyer came forward within weeks. "It was relatively easy, although there was that hitch, and the people we are now selling to are first-time buyers, so we're hoping there isn't going to be a problem, touch wood," Mrs Templeton said.

The Templetons were moving up a level themselves in the housing market, and had £160,000 to spend in Dulwich in south London. At first they were disappointed to discover it would buy them little more than their existing home in Croydon.

Eventually they found a modern four-bedroom detached house, and extended their mortgage. Mrs Templeton said: "They were very competitive, and it was difficult to work out because no deal was the same as another. We're glad to be moving at last. It just felt like the time was right."

Ospreys off danger list

Bird experts predict that more than 100 pairs of ospreys will breed in Scotland this year for the first time since they were wiped out by Victorian hunters and egg collectors.

The phenomenal success of the species, which returned to Scotland in 1959, has now resulted in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds taking it off the endangered list. In Scotland last year 99 pairs built nests and reared 140 young. Yesterday the most famous pair of all were settling in at the

top of a Scots pine, unaware that more than 50,000 people will watch their comings and goings live on television. For several years, they have nested in the RSPB's Boat of Garten nature reserve near Aviemore, where a video camera is trained on them. An RSPB spokesman, Derek Nieman, said: "The reintroduction of the ospreys has been an astounding success. They are now a well established part of Scotland's wildlife and would be better described as rare, but no longer endangered."



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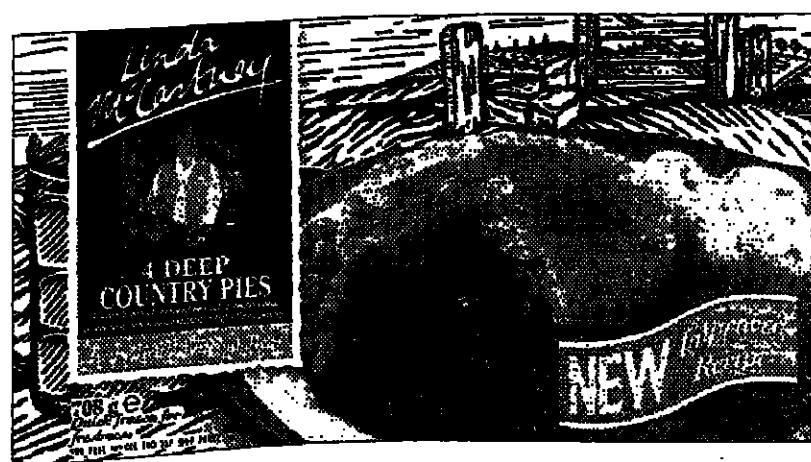
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news

Grammar schools: Union condemns 'divisive' plan

Teachers vote to fight greater pupil selection

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

The union which represents more grammar school teachers than any other is to campaign against increased selection in schools.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers, meeting in Torquay, Devon, heard yesterday that plans for a grammar school in every town would also create secondary moderns where standards would be low.

The union, which has 800 members in the country's 160 grammar schools and 16,000 in independent schools, voted overwhelmingly to condemn government moves to increase selection.

The Prime Minister has announced that comprehensives will be allowed to select up to 15 per cent of their pupils, and in White Paper in June will set out a range of options including the creation of new grammar schools by private companies working together with parents.

An emergency resolution to the union's annual conference called for the existing system to be maintained. Proposing the motion, Martin Kamm from John Taylor High School in Staffordshire, said selection

would mean lower ability intakes in comprehensives. "It doesn't matter what you call them, they are secondary modern schools as far as parents and children are concerned."

Having started his own career in a secondary modern, he had seen the effects the 11-plus had



Peter Smith: Increasing selection is 'divisive'

had on pupils. "The brighter ones, when they came in, had a chip on their shoulders - they had failed. That's how they and their parents saw it," he said.

But Stephen Woodley, from the independent King's School in Canterbury, Kent, supported the Government's plans. "We should not look as if sim-

ply to be against selection at all costs is our policy," he said. "I have never thought that secondary modern schools can't work. They can work provided they have sufficient resources and sufficient support."

Peter Smith, the ATL's general secretary, said the union would now campaign against the move. "It is divisive. The real agenda is to improve the schools we have got for all the children who go to them," he said.

"There is a grave danger that if you create grammar schools what you will do is to produce secondary schools at best, sink schools at worst."

A Harris poll carried out for the association last month showed that selection was low on the public's list of priorities, he added. Nine out of ten people polled wanted better discipline, more cash for schools and more books and equipment. Fewer than half wanted more selection to raise standards, placing it tenth in rank order.

Mr Smith said eight out of ten branch secretaries in the association felt that the physical condition of schools in their areas was having an adverse effect on pupils' education. Nine out of ten said it had led to concerns about health and safety.



Spirit of Liverpool: John Larson, head of sculpture at the city's Walker Art Gallery, with the marble figurehead statue that is due to be replaced on the building this summer after being recut in China. Photograph: Mercury Press

Sacked workers get £6m payout

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

More than 2,000 shipyard workers who were thrown out of work without redundancy pay are to share nearly £6m in compensation.

The former employees of Swan Hunter, on Tyneside, will each receive between £450 and £15,000 - depending on length of service - as part of an out-of-court settlement with the receivers, Price Waterhouse.

The City firm originally argued that as receivers they were not liable to pay sums due under agreements with the previous management.

However, after prolonged negotiations involving the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, Price Waterhouse agreed a package for the workers who were made redundant over a two-year period.

Tommy Brennan, of the GMB general union, said: "This is a sweet victory, but all we have won is what the workers would have been entitled to if they had been made redundant by the employers rather than the receivers. It has been a long haul caused by the total neglect of workers' rights."

Stefan Cross, of Thompsons, solicitors acting for the unions, said the workers would have to accept the deal by the end of April. "Negotiations have been tough but fair and we are very pleased with the settlement."

The deal was struck in the wake of a House of Lords ruling in 1994 which left receivers and administrators liable to settle claims from workers they had laid off.

Gordon Horsfield, joint receiver, said the level of the settlement realised the worst fears of insolvency practitioners, prompted by the Lords' ruling. The Swan deal covers, severance pay, wages in lieu of notice and payment for a period when workers were laid off during the receivership.

"This settlement almost certainly removes any prospect of dividends being paid to preferential and unsecured creditors," he said. The settlement would have to be accepted by 95 per cent of the redundant workers to become operational.

Dixons

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Threat to honey pots of Kent

The Garden of England is in the grip of a bee disease which could send prices of honey, fruit and vegetables soaring.

The varroa mite - which infects bee larvae so generations become increasingly weakened and deformed - is threatening honey and market-garden businesses and beekeepers are calling on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to provide a compensation payout similar to that offered where cattle are affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Tony Fisher, an amateur beekeeper of Canterbury, warns that the mite is spreading rapidly. "There is a very good friend of mine who normally keeps 400 hives. Because of the varroa mite that has been reduced to just 20. Elsewhere, others I know are seeing the number of hives reduced by 80 per cent," he said. The mite arrived in Britain four years ago, when it was first detected in Devon. It had been known on the Continent for years, but had been controlled. It is feared that this year will be

Britain's worst for the pest. A spokesman for the Ashford Beekeeping Association said: "A lot of our members are being wiped out because of this and it is proving a problem to the commercial side as well."

"I think it is inevitable that prices will rise, if not this summer then next year. The problem is that not only honey will be affected - there is a knock-on effect which will see fruit and vegetables touched by it too ... there are fewer bees to pollinate orchards and vegetable gardens."

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Diplomatic protest: Foreign Office demands immediate release of round-the-world travellers seized on yacht by armed men

Eritrea holds British couple on spy claims

WILL BENNETT

Britain yesterday demanded the release of a couple arrested on suspicion of spying in Eritrea more than two weeks ago while on a marathon round the world yacht trip.

The Foreign Office also asked for an immediate explanation for the continuing detention of Peter and Shirley Billing, who were seized by armed men on board their yacht on 19 March. They left Britain to travel 13 years ago.

Mr Billing, 64, and his wife, 61, were originally thought to have been arrested because they anchored in a restricted area off the Hani Islands in the Red Sea, which are the subject of a territorial dispute between Eritrea and Yemen.

But yesterday Rod Hicks,

the British consul in Asmara, the Eritrean capital, said that their 35ft ketch *Cyprien* had been anchored within Eritrean territorial waters and well away from the islands. "We have not been told why they are being held," Dr Hicks said. "They are being detained by the authorities in a hotel, where they are being well treated."

Mrs Billing said yesterday: "We have got stronger and more independent as time has gone on. If I had been questioned hard before I would probably have cried but I suppose they were just doing their job. They seemed to think we are spies, which is ridiculous."

"The whole thing is going on a bit and we are still apprehensive because we just don't know which way they are likely to go."

A Foreign Office spokesman said: "We have protested to the Eritreans and we are pressing for a full explanation and early action. We want to see Mr and Mrs Billing released and returned to their vessel."

He added that the British embassy in neighbouring Ethiopia, which oversees the United Kingdom's interests in Eritrea, had also been instructed "to register our deep concern over the Billings and demand a full explanation".

Mr Habtom Gebremichael, the Eritrean Consul-General in London, was not available for comment yesterday.

Although no formal explanation of the Billings' arrest has been forthcoming it is believed that Eritrea, which fought a long war to win independence from Ethiopia, is still nervous about

security in its coastal waters. The Billings and a French couple arrested in similar circumstances were taken to an army camp and kept under armed guard in a mice-infested hut for three days. They were then flown to Asmara for questioning and it was not until Sunday that they were allowed to see Dr Hicks.

Mr Billing, an electronics engineer, and his wife sold their home in Wokingham, Berkshire, and left England in 1983 to travel round the world by yacht. They are experienced navigators who took advice from the crews of other yachts about where they could anchor off Eritrea.

Their voyage has taken them to the Caribbean, the Galapagos Islands off Ecuador, the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Oman and Yemen.



Troubled waters: Peter and Shirley Billing pictured on their yacht in America earlier in their voyage

BT's managers vote to disrupt phones over pay

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

British Telecom customers face delays and disruption after thousands of managers voted by four to one to take industrial action in protest at a pay offer worth 6 per cent.

Members of the Society of Telecom Executives decided by 6,782 to 1,683 to disrupt services, arguing that individual increases would depend largely on a "discredited" performance pay system.

It is understood that following the overwhelming mandate for industrial action short of strikes, the union may decide to ban overtime which frequently makes up about 20 per cent of managers' hours. Other options could include a work to rule and a "withdrawal of goodwill". Repair of telephone faults could be among the services to be hit, according to union sources.

The pay rise, which BT intends to "impose" on its employees, is made up of two elements. An average 4 per cent increase will be paid in the form of a "consolidated" rise and a further 2 per cent as one-off lump sum payments of £750 to £1,200.

A spokeswoman for BT said the company would be favouring lower paid middle managers

in the distribution of performance pay. The company felt that those at the top of the £18,000 to £36,000 pay range were already well remunerated compared with comparable jobs in other companies.

Simon Petch, general secretary of the union, said the offer was shrouded in secrecy because no one knew how much each individual would receive or how the decision would be made. He said some might get nothing, adding: "Many simply do not trust the company to treat them fairly and resent a system which is so shrouded in secrecy."

Some outstanding performers have seen their pay artificially held down because they were deemed to be earning enough already, Mr Petch said. Most managers received no pay rise in 1994 and two-thirds of them got less than the inflation rate last year.

Both sides acknowledged that talks were probable next week in an attempt to avoid disruption.

BT said the package was fair and registered its disappointment with the vote by members of the union who made up 13,500 out of the 20,000-strong layer of middle management. The company's spokeswoman said it did not expect services to be disrupted.

Family acts over death in custody

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

The family of a man who died after being in police custody are to launch an appeal to pay for a private prosecution against two officers who were involved in a struggle with the dead man.

The move follows an announcement by the Crown Prosecution Service that no police officers involved in the incident should be prosecuted because of insufficient evidence.

Brian Douglas, 33, a music promoter, died after his arrest last May in south-west London. He suffered a fractured skull, which his family claimed was caused by the use of the new American-style batons.

His brother Donald, 40, a charity director, said yesterday that he and other members of the family were seeing lawyers to plan a private criminal prosecution, and that it would cost about £70,000.

"We have no choice but to launch an appeal to raise that sort of money," he said. "In addition, we hope to have a QC

at the inquest which should be held soon, and there is no legal aid for us."

Mr Douglas, assistant divisional director of Save the Children fund, said he did not pin much faith on all the facts being aired at the resumed inquest, which was opened and adjourned to allow the CPS to consider prosecuting.

He said that the advice the family had received from QCs suggested that a private prosecution could be launched.

His brother died in St Thomas's hospital, five days after being arrested in Clapham, south-west London.

He was involved in a struggle with two police officers and was taken to Vauxhall police station on suspicion of being under the influence of drugs and drink. A post-mortem examination found that he had a fractured skull but the cause of death will not be made public until the inquest into his death.

After the death, Scotland Yard said: "Two police officers took action to ensure their own safety after a knife and a CS gas canister were produced."

Abuse inquiry suicide

The owner of a care home who killed himself hours before he was to be charged with abusing mentally handicapped young people, left a note placing his faith in God and the life after-life, an inquest at Windsor, Berkshire, was told yesterday.

Gordon Rowe, 61, was found slumped in a car on a road known as Devil's Highway. A post-mortem examination revealed that he died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

A 19-month investigation into allegations of sexual and physical abuse at his Longcare homes at Stoke Green House and Stoke Place Mansion House, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, was about to conclude. A police source said Mr Rowe would have been charged.

The East Berkshire coroner, Robert Wilson, who heard that he left a seven-page letter to his two sons and second wife, recorded a verdict of suicide.

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news

Women who quit smoking cut cervical cancer

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

Women who quit smoking can reverse abnormal cell changes in the cervix, according to new research which strengthens the link between smoking and cervical cancer.

Scientists say that stopping smoking may boost the woman's immune system and enable it to deal with abnormal cells, preventing any further adverse changes. Smoking is thought to weaken the immune response in the cervix.

Dr Anne Szarewski, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund which carried out the study, said: "The results suggest that it is well worth women trying to stop smoking if their smear test shows mild abnormality. They might even be able to avoid having treatment at a later date."

A group of 82 women smokers with abnormal-looking areas

on the cervix agreed to try to give up smoking for six months. Seventeen stopped completely and eleven cut down by more than three-quarters. The quitters and the non-quitters were similar in age, contraceptive use, menstrual cycles and sexual habits.

After six months, more than 80 per cent of those who had quit or reduced their smoking by at least 75 per cent showed a reduction in the size of the abnormal-looking area, compared with less than 20 per cent of those who continued to smoke.

The more the women reduced their smoking the greater was the reduction in the size of the lesion on the cervix," the ICRF says.

Previous studies have suggested a strong link between smoking and cervical cancer. Dr Szarewski said: "However, it has not been altogether clear whether this is due to smoking *per se* or something else to do with lifestyle. This study is

unique in trying to find out whether stopping smoking causes abnormal-looking areas on the cervix to get smaller."

There is also evidence that smoking can weaken the cervix's immune response against viruses - a virus is implicated in cervical cancer - bacteria and other toxins.

"Smoking cessation may be allowing the immune system to recover, leading to a reduction in size of mild cervical lesions," Dr Szarewski added. "Our study adds to the evidence supporting a direct link between smoking and cervical disease."

In their report, published in tomorrow's issue of the *Lancet*, the ICRF scientists point out that quitting or cutting down on smoking could affect only those lesions that are unlikely to become cancerous. However, they conclude that "women with early cervical abnormalities may benefit from smoking cessation".



Transfer market: The age-old tradition of collecting and swapping football stickers being carried on by two young boys at Wembley stadium yesterday at a swap-shop for stickers
Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Tycoon fights to keep 'son' in UK

The millionaire businessman Richard Morley confirmed yesterday that he is to fight a last-ditch court battle to prevent the deportation of the Nepalese teenager he calls his son.

After 19-year-old Jayaram Khadka reported to Coleford police station in Gloucestershire yesterday, Mr Morley announced that appeal papers would be lodged next Wednesday for a judicial review.

He is to contest a deportation order confirmed last week by the Home Secretary which says Mr Khadka is an illegal immigrant. The civil rights lawyer Rudy Narayan will be leading a defence team.

Mr Morley, who lives at Clearwell Castle in the Forest of Dean, said the appeal would be on the grounds that the Home Secretary had failed to examine the case properly.

He made a promise to Mr Khadka's late father - who helped to save his life after a climbing accident - that he would look after his son if anything happened to him. And he now says he will move to Nepal if Mr Khadka is deported.

Lloyd's loses race-bias case over job cuts

The Lloyd's insurance giant was branded as racist yesterday when two former staff members who were isolated in a room because they were Asian, and then made redundant, were awarded about £30,000 each at an industrial tribunal.

Baldev Sahota and Latif Khan were segregated from 28 white colleagues in their department and given little work to do, the tribunal was told.

The two highly-qualified risk assessors, who earned £33,000 a year, suffered six months of segregation at Lloyd's Register of Shipping before they were finally told to go.

The tribunal's chairman, David Booth, said: "So far as race discrimination was concerned, it was clear that Lloyd's was the discriminator. The detriment was dismissal."

"Whilst Lloyd's has not admitted it was a racial decision, it was perfectly clear to anyone looking at it that it was."

Mr Sahota, 52, who was born in India, and his colleague at the world's largest marine insurer, Mr Khan, 50, originally from Pakistan, told how the white-dominated company continually victimised them at the office in Croydon, south-east London.

Mr Sahota said: "I was made to sit in a corner of the office and not given any work. They made it clear they did not want me. New recruits would come in and be sat at my desk and soon afterwards they would be given work. It was humiliating and degrading."

The two men had worked for Lloyd's Register for four years but had worked at the Croydon office six months when they were sacked in April 1994.

The tribunal in Croydon upheld the men's claims for racial discrimination and unfair dismissal at an earlier hearing in January.

After the award yesterday Mr Sahota, of Camberley, Surrey, said he was delighted that justice had been done.

He said: "I am glad that it is all finally over, it has been a very difficult two years. I will now concentrate on getting on with the rest of my life."

Mr Sahota told the hearing to decide compensation that he and Mr Khan were "stunned" by the loss of their jobs. "I asked myself why was this happening to us. We were the only two people who were isolated in that office."

"After I was sacked I lost all my confidence and dignity. Being made redundant in such a discriminatory way set me back so much, I could not even go out in the street."

Mr Khan, of Wimbledon, south-west London, added: "We were forced to sit in a corner. The isolation was misery. When you are confined to yourself, you spend a lot of time just thinking about yourself."

"We were segregated to one corner of the building and we were not given any work. If in this civilised world, somebody segregates you due to your colour or race, then I am sure it is a great shame."

Lloyd's moved the men, who certify the safety of off-shore oil rigs for insurance, back to its Croydon office in October 1993, after the off-shore work died down. Six months later they were sacked.

But in a memo dated 11 October 1993, the manager of the department made clear his intention to sack them. In the office there were 28 white workers and only four other non-whites.

Mr Booth said in his ruling: "Following the end of their secondment, they were returned to the main [Croydon] office and both were left in an isolated part of the building."

"Management said that this was because they were awaiting reassignment to other tasks. The applicants claim that no white employee was treated in that way, an assertion we accept."

"They further claimed they were being isolated in order to prove that they were redundant."

In the memo dated the 11 October 1993, the manager has made up his mind they were redundant, but the applicants were not told about this until March 1994.

The exact compensation figure was due to be released today.

DAILY POEM

I am the Great Sun

From a Normandy crucifix of 1632

By Charles Causley

I am the great sun, but you do not see me,
I am your husband, but you turn away.
I am the captive, but you do not free me,
I am the captain but you will not obey.

I am the truth, but you will not believe me,
I am the city where you will not stay,
I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me,
I am that God to whom you will not pray.

I am your counsel, but you do not hear me,
I am the lover whom you will betray,
I am the victor, but you do not cheer me,
I am the holy dove whom you will slay.

I am your life, but if you will not name me,
Seal up your soul with tears, and never blame me.

Charles Causley was born and has lived, apart from six years in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, in Launceston, Cornwall. In 1990 he was awarded the Ingersoll/TS Eliot Award, given to authors "of abiding importance whose work affirms the moral principles of western civilisation". This poem

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Militias bring terror to heart of Burundi

DAVID ORR
Mokamba

Smoke was still rising from the embers of a roadside shop and from the burned-out cars in the hospital yard. In a ward lay two wounded men, one of them motionless and bloody on the mattress.

The grim-faced hospital doctor led the way to the morgue. Inside, the bodies of four men had been placed on stretchers. One had a bullet wound on his temple. Lying on the floor of a neighbouring room were the bodies of a family of eight. The arms of a baby and a child were intertwined with a woman. They had been shot and slashed to death with machetes.

"The man with the bullet through his head is our anaesthetist," said Dr Hilaire Ninterese. "When the rebels came they went to his home, asked his wife to leave, then executed him. We're waiting for more bodies to arrive. I heard one or two more families were also massacred."

The attack on Makamba, a town in southern Burundi, came at dawn on Wednesday. It was

made — of this there is no doubt among the populace — by one of the Hutu militias which have terrorised the region since the middle of last month.

In addition to attacking the hospital and looting the pharmacy, the guerrillas vandalised the governor's office and municipal buildings. The family in the morgue was from the minority Tutsi group, though locals said some of the dead were Hutus. Why Makamba's garrison had not fought back is unclear. Perhaps they were afraid. It was rumoured the rebels had been heard singing in the hills before swooping on the town.

"After the attack they went off into the mountains," said the governor, Jean-Baptiste Gahimbiri, pointing at the hills to the east. "My position is very difficult. The politicians come down here talking of pacification and all sorts of things. But when there's an attack they're nowhere to be seen."

The governor looked helplessly at the vast crowd which had gathered at the crossroads. There were about 1,500 men in silent groups and women with bewildered children.

An armoured car and trucks full of soldiers raced past on the road. The townspeople stared back at the governor, waiting for him to tell them what to do. Most had suitcases or hastily packed bundles of clothes. Some carried mattresses.

This week's raid on Makamba is part of a series of attacks launched by the so-called *bandes armées*, Hutu rebels, in southern Burundi over recent weeks. The incidents mark a significant escalation of the insurgency, which hitherto was confined mainly to the northern half of the country. They demonstrate the growing ability of the Hutu militias to strike at will and push deep into areas regarded as the heartland of the Tutsi-led army.

The capital, Bujumbura, now all but "cleansed" of Hutus, is quiet, although it may only be a matter of time before the rebels fire rockets from the surrounding hills. The countryside is more insecure than ever, with many roads off-limits to all but the army.

The hills around Makamba are filled with displaced people. Some have fled the marauding

Hutu rebels, others the military, whose campaign against the insurgents is often indiscriminate in its ferocity.

Two and a half years after the outbreak of fighting triggered by the assassination of Burundi's first elected Hutu president, the conflict shows no signs of resolution. The rebels seem better organised than before. Chief among the Hutu extremist groups is the Force for the Defence of Democracy, led by a former interior minister, Leonard Nyangoma, an exile in Zaire.

The government, a fragile coalition of parties headed by the mostly Hutu Frodebu and the mostly Tutsi Uprona, appears paralysed. There is little common ground between Uprona and Frodebu, diplomats say. Hope that the moderates can hold their own is fading.

There is growing international pressure on the government to talk to the extremist factions. But Uprona is against talking to Nyangoma and other Hutu hardline groups. Many fear Burundi could suffer the same fate as Rwanda, where genocide broke out two years ago this weekend.



Touch down: Jacques Chirac, the first international leader to visit Lebanon since the end of the 1975-90 civil war, inspects a guard of honour at Beirut airport with President Elias Hrawi (left). Photograph: Reuters

Chirac buries a broken past

ROBERT FISK
Beirut

The portraits of Ayatollah Khomeini and Imam Musa Sadr had been removed from the airport road the night before. More than 150 soldiers in their new American helmets had surrounded the headquarters of the Lebanese trade unions; there would be no protests for higher wages to mark Jacques Chirac's visit. Only when he walked into the restored parliament building on the old Beirut front line did the President come face to face with Lebanon's continuing war.

As Mr Chirac sat stony-faced on the dais above the 128 assembly members, Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, insisted that resistance to foreign occupation could not be described as "terrorism", and compared the Lebanese guerrilla forces who

are fighting the Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon to the French resistance, which struggled against the Nazis.

Since many of the Lebanese fighters are members of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah — whose satellite groups kidnapped French civilians during the Lebanese civil war and blew up the French paratrooper headquarters in the city in 1983 — Mr Berri's words were unlikely to commend themselves to the French President.

But as the first international leader to visit Lebanon since the end of the 1975-90 civil war, he was all grace and favour. When he responded to Mr Berri, it was to quote Charles de Gaulle, insisting France would help in Lebanon's reconstruction and would support it to become "the economic and financial heart of the Middle East".

Here was a phrase that might

not find favour with Israelis, who very much intend to make sure that Israel, rather than Lebanon, becomes the new economic powerhouse of the region, always supposing the crumbling peace process can be saved. But Mr Chirac had some coded messages for both sides.

France wanted respect, he said, for UN Security Council resolution 425, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon — but he wanted, too, to see "the Lebanese security forces alone" guard their sovereign territory after an Israeli withdrawal. In other words — although he did not say so directly — France wanted Syria's 22,000 troops to leave, once the Israelis have completed their withdrawal.

Since President Assad has always insisted that the Syrians will stay until the last Israeli has left, there was nothing in the speech to offend Damascus.

And Christian Lebanese groups who have been complaining about Syria's military presence will not have objected to Mr Chirac's remarks on the need for an exclusively Lebanese army to control Lebanon.

His references to resolution 425 received prolonged applause from an audience which included six Hizbollah members of parliament and the Iranian ambassador.

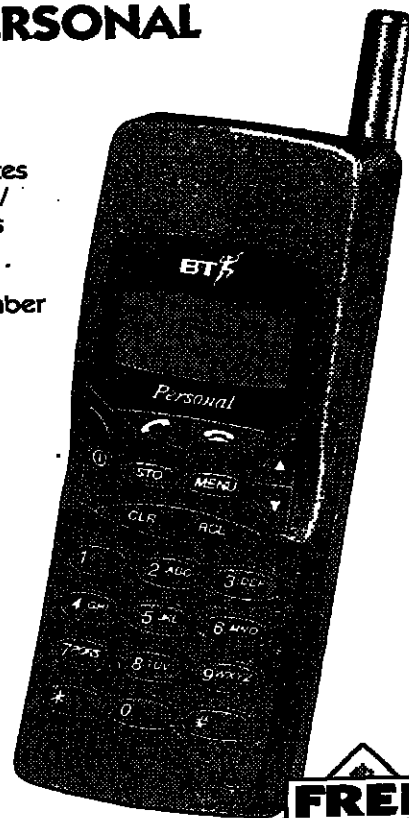
Did he reflect, one wondered, on the fact that an organisation closely associated with that same Hizbollah had killed 58 French soldiers in the 1983 suicide bombing, a slaughter to which he is to unveil a memorial in the grounds of the French embassy tomorrow morning?

But history can be cruel and Mr Chirac's visit is intended to symbolise a new future rather than a broken past, for both the Lebanese and the French.

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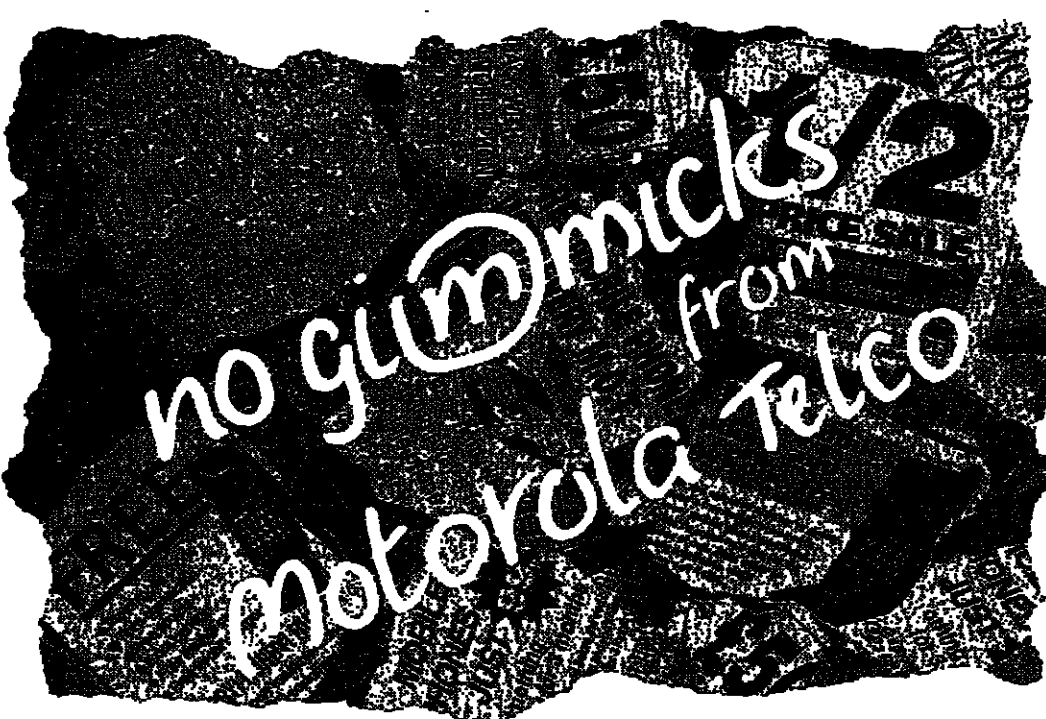
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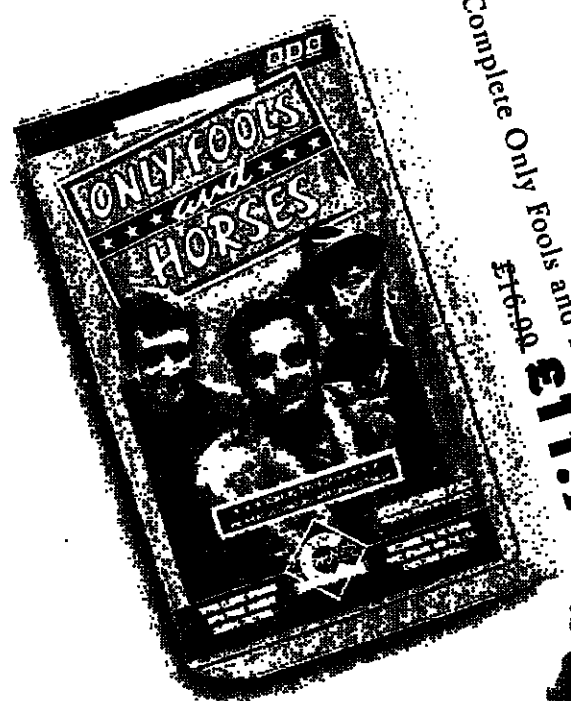
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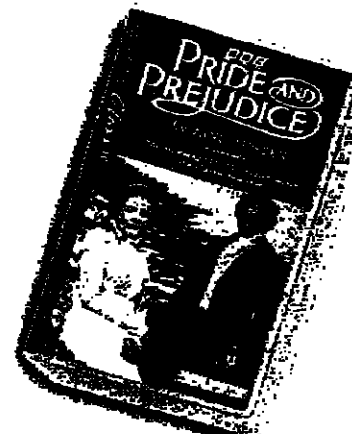
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Balkan air tragedy: Storms complicate efforts to piece together final moments of flight which cost top Clinton aide his life

Delays hampered crash rescue efforts

EMMA DALY
Dubrovnik

An investigation began yesterday into the last moments of the US military plane, carrying an American cabinet minister and senior businessmen on a Balkan trade trip, that crashed into a mountain only three kilometres north of Dubrovnik airport, killing all on board. One woman survived the six hours it took medical teams to reach the site, but died later.

Elite Croatian and US units have located 33 bodies – including that of Ron Brown, the US commerce secretary – but there is a dispute over passenger numbers. There were two flight manifests: one listed 33 names, the other 35.

To add to the confusion, two of the bodies recovered are named only on the longer list, and while the Croatian prime minister, Zlatko Matesa, said the search and rescue mission was now over, US officials – who fear two bodies are missing – said it would continue.

A team of US aviation officials arrived yesterday to determine why the US military 737 flew off course and hit a steep barren ridge line around 500 metres above sea level. Weather was cited as a possible factor – locals described it as the worst storm in a decade – but that does not explain the plane's course along an inland valley, parallel to the coastline, which the pilot should have followed. Nor is it clear why searchers could not pinpoint the spot at which the plane disappeared from radar screens.

In sombre mood, Peter Galbraith, the US ambassador to

Croatia, said yesterday: "The plane was not where it should have been."

The last communication with air traffic control at Dubrovnik, Mr Brown's destination, came at around 3pm, when the pilot reported flying over the island of Korčula, north of the Adriatic city. "That's a normal procedure," said Mr Matesa.

Shortly after, the plane disappeared from radar screens both in Dubrovnik and aboard military surveillance planes in the area. "They [the tower] just informed me that they lost him," said Mr Matesa. He added that searchers had found the cockpit voice recorder, located in the tail section.

The hostile terrain and the atrocious weather – thick fog and torrential downpours – hampered the rescue operation, but questions were also raised about delays in identifying and reaching the crash site. Initial aerial searches focused on the coastline, but a villager who saw the plane flying low and heard the crash walked to a neighbouring hamlet, telephoned the airport and alerted police.

Croatian troops reached the site – up a long, twisting dirt track, followed by a 500-metre hike over boulders – at around 7.30pm. But it seems that the first American forces did not arrive until midnight. A Croatian doctor alerted at 7.30pm reached the mountainside at 9pm and scrambled up the site wearing her white coat and medical clogs. But she was too late to save the one survivor, an American woman, who died on her way to hospital.

Since helicopters were unable to land, US special services

despatched from Brindisi, who included a surgeon, abseiled down on ropes to the crash scene. One team member, Major Lewis Boone, described the crash site as he saw it after dawn.

"The first impression was the absolutely inaccessible terrain," he said. "As you got to where the site was it was literally hand over foot-type climbing over boulders."

He saw debris, then one engine; the tail section sheared off at the rear door, perched upright on the slope; and a piece of wing. And some of the victims.

"The remains of the people I saw were in and around the area by the tail section," he said. "It was very upsetting."

Personal effects such as suitcases were strewn around the

area. Other sources said some bodies were found still strapped in their seats.

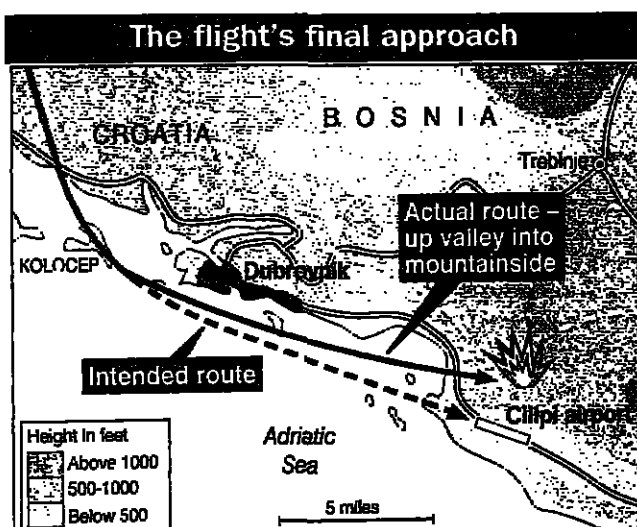
Journalists were barred from the scene by Croatian troops, but from the main road we could see the night punctuated by frantic activity, police lights flashing red and blue on the mountainside, the rumble of Hercules transport planes at the airport and the flicker of helicopter lights circling overhead.

Conditions were so bad that teams of searchers were rotated over 45 minutes or so, Major Boone said. A procession of army trucks brought down groups of bedraggled soldiers wrapped in blankets. "The area was incredibly hard to get to and there wasn't much left of the plane," the major added. "That was pretty shocking."

Ron Brown obituary, page 18



President Bill Clinton and his cabinet observe a moment of silence at the White House late on Wednesday as hope began to fade that Ron Brown, the US Commerce Secretary, had survived the plane crash in Croatia



IN BRIEF

Nazi SS captain on trial for war massacre

Rome — A military court yesterday ordered the former SS captain Erich Priebke to stand trial for the Nazi massacre of 335 Italian men and boys during the Second World War. Lawyers at the closed-door preliminary hearing said 82-year-old Priebke showed no emotion as examining judge Giuseppe Massi announced his decision to send him to trial for "multiple homicide aggravated by cruelty". Priebke will be tried for his role in the March 1944 massacre at the Ardeatine Caves outside Rome, Italy's worst wartime atrocity. The trial opens on 8 May. *Reuters*

Sudan seeks to end 13-year civil war

Nairobi — Sudan's government has begun moves to bring to an end the country's 13-year civil war by contacting southern rebel factions, following the loss of two government garrisons last month, and is seeking a "peaceful solution to the south Sudan problem", said a statement from the Sudanese Embassy in Nairobi. *Reuters*

Shots fired close to Yeltsin's home

Moscow — Gunmen fired shots near the Moscow home of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, adding to the capital's security headaches just 10 weeks before a presidential election, police said. Interfax news agency said the shots were fired in the direction of the President's home on Wednesday evening, but according to Itar-Tass agency Yeltsin's house was not the target and the bullets were aimed at a house nearby. Nobody was hurt. *Reuters*

Arrests over Belgian grenade attack

Brussels — Belgian authorities arrested two Bosnians and a Moroccan in connection with a November grenade attack on police, officials said. One of the detained is suspected of having links with the Algerian Islamic militant group GIA, according to a police official. The group's supporters were blamed for the bombings in Paris last summer which killed seven people. *AP*

Dictator's mass-murder trial resumes

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia — The trial of 70 officials accused of mass murder under the dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam was scheduled to resume yesterday following a delay during which attorneys requested time to prepare their defence. The former president and 23 others are being tried in absentia after they obtained asylum outside the country in 1991. *AP*

Iraqi general stands against Saddam

Amman — A former Iraqi army commander who fled to Jordan last month announced he was joining the ranks of the Iraqi National Accord Group, which seeks to overthrow President Saddam Hussein. Staff-Lieutenant General Nizar Khazraj said in a statement: "Saddam's policies have destroyed the sovereignty and integrity of Iraq, its people and its armed forces." *Reuters*

Amnesty accuses 'reckless' police

Paris — Amnesty International said yesterday that French police have failed to change a pattern of "reckless" use of force, including shootings and beatings, detailed in the rights group's highly critical report of October 1994. The group noted that the victims of such abuse "were often juveniles and many were of non-European ethnic origin". *AP*

Chinese predicted Jiashi earthquake

Peking — Chinese seismologists predicted months in advance the earthquake that recently shook the western Xinjiang region, the earthquake agency said. Seismologists forecast at a seminar last year that a tremor measuring 6 to 7 on the Richter scale would hit the Jiashi region between 25 December 1995 and 25 March 1996. An earthquake of 6.9 on the Richter scale rocked the area on 19 March, killing 26 people. *AP*



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BRAND: POURQUOI PAS LE FILM...?

Screen test: How Paris Match sees Isabelle Adjani and Richard Berry as Danielle and François Mitterrands

Parisians game to play God

What if a French filmmaker set out to produce an account of the Mitterrand era on the model of JFK or Nixon? The weekly *Paris Match* offers what it thinks could be the ideal casting: Isabelle Adjani (last seen in *La Reine Margot*) to play Danielle Mitterrand, Richard Berry, starring in a comedy about the clash between gay and straight lifestyles, as Dieu himself, and for Anne Pinguet, Mitterrand's long-time mistress, Fanny Ardant. The magazine also found the ideal actors for the role of Mitterrand's illegitimate daughter, Mazarine, and two of his prime ministers, Michel Rocard and Laurent Fabius.

Unfortunately a spanner was put in the works of this ingenious scenario right away by Adjani who said she didn't think she would be at all good as Danielle Mitterrand and had the temerity to propose someone far less well-known in her place.

PEOPLE



Patrick d'Arvor: Return to TV news after 100-day ban

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, France's 52-year-old star television presenter, is back on the screen of TF1's main evening news programme after a 100-day suspension, playing himself. He was banished in January, just before his conviction for corruption was upheld. His crime was to have accepted gifts, including holidays and designer suits, from the PR agent of the former mayor of Lyons, Michel Noir. His defence was that everyone else in the journalistic establishment was doing the same.

The return of PPDA, as he is known, has divided the French media: some think that his return discredits the news, others think that his private and professional lives can be separated. PPDA has spent his enforced leisure promoting his novel, filming in Madagascar and interviewing the Burmese dissident, Aung San Suu Kyi, for TF1. The clinching argument for his return, however, seems to be the French television ratings war: the audience for the 8pm news declined during his absence. If it does not pick up now, the *cognoscenti* say, his future will be on the line again.

How do you play a national treasure? And more to the point, who should be allowed to play such a role? The rush to put the life of Nelson Mandela on celluloid is forcing these questions to be examined more urgently. The South Africans, as one would expect, are protective, not to say possessive. The rest of the world might regard Mandela as a beacon for humanity, but his homeland is proprietorial. Having housed and fed him for 27 years, it presumably feels it has a stake in the legend.

So when it was announced yesterday that Miami-born, Ba-

hamas-educated, English-sounding Sidney Poitier wanted the part, African feathers were ruffled. "The veracity of the story, its texture and reality, could only come from a South African performance," said Dan Robbette of the South African actors' union.

But the American backers of a planned television film for the US Showtime channel do not agree. The South African producer of the film, David Wicht, says the backers would only fund the film if Poitier was the star. "There are only a few actors out there who could convincingly play Nelson Mandela and Sidney Poitier is one of them," Mr Wicht said. Robbette says local actors John Kani, Winston Ntshona or Zakes Mokae all have the skill to play the "national treasure". Recently Mandela supported the tiny local film industry by selling rights to his best-selling autobiography to South African director Anant Singh. "It is our duty to primarily support our own artists and give them resources and backing," Mr Mandela said. It looks like an uphill struggle. The top tip for the hero's role in a third film is Harry Belafonte.

James Roberts

Florence fights back against tourist army

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

With two international summit meetings looming at the start of a long, hot tourist season, the city of Florence is taking some unorthodox measures to spruce itself up and take control of the armies of visitors invading its streets and museums.

Coach parties wanting to come into the centre of town will have to book ahead and pay an admission fee if they want to get past checkpoints being set up at the two main motorway

and 15 June, and a European Union summit a week later, the city has banned the feeding of stray cats and introduced stiff fines for dog-owners who fail to clear up after their animals. Special handlers, meanwhile, are capturing Florence's 200,000 pigeons, feeding them contraceptive pills and exterminating any which show signs of illness.

And if that sounds weird, there is something even stranger in store for the summit days: the horses who transport tourists around the city's centre on specially painted carriages will be obliged to wear special nappies so they run no risk of fouling up the proceedings.

"We're not trying to stop anyone getting in to the city. We just want to regulate things a bit so that the avalanches of tourists don't end up overwhelming us," said Amos Cecchi, the Florence mobility councillor, a special post created last year to deal with the moving walls of distressed flesh that press into the city of Brunelleschi and Michelangelo every spring and summer.

The measures, which mark the beginning of an effort to provide comprehensive booking packages for tourists covering hotels, museums, restaurants and cultural events, have not made Mr Cecchi particularly popular in Florence, which has seen scores of crowd-control plans come and go without any noticeable success.

The tourists, however, may not mind so much. Anyone who stands patiently in line to get into the Uffizi these days could be forgiven for thinking that Botticelli's *Venus* rises not from a seashell but atop the bobbing heads of assorted backpackers from Karlsruhe, Osaka and Cleveland, Ohio.

Millions of visitors besiege Florence, Venice and Rome every year and their numbers are rising. In Rome, where the problem is less noticeable because of its size, the authorities have told coach operators that anyone caught parking illegally this summer will have to come to grips with giant sets of wheelclamps specially made to combat the problem.



Alluring: Art-lovers flock to see Botticelli's 'Venus'

exits to the north and south of the Tuscan capital from the beginning of May. Only 150 coaches will be admitted each day: the other 400-odd now double- or triple-parking on Florence's narrow medieval streets, will have to stop on the outskirts, where buses will pick up the tourists and take them in and out of town.

Similarly, anyone wanting to visit the Uffizi Museum, home to many of the defining masterpieces of Italian Renaissance painting, will have to buy a ticket in advance and turn up at a pre-arranged time. The days of half-mile-long queues snaking all the way around Piazza della Signoria may soon be a thing of the past.

In the run-up to an international meeting on Bosnia on 14

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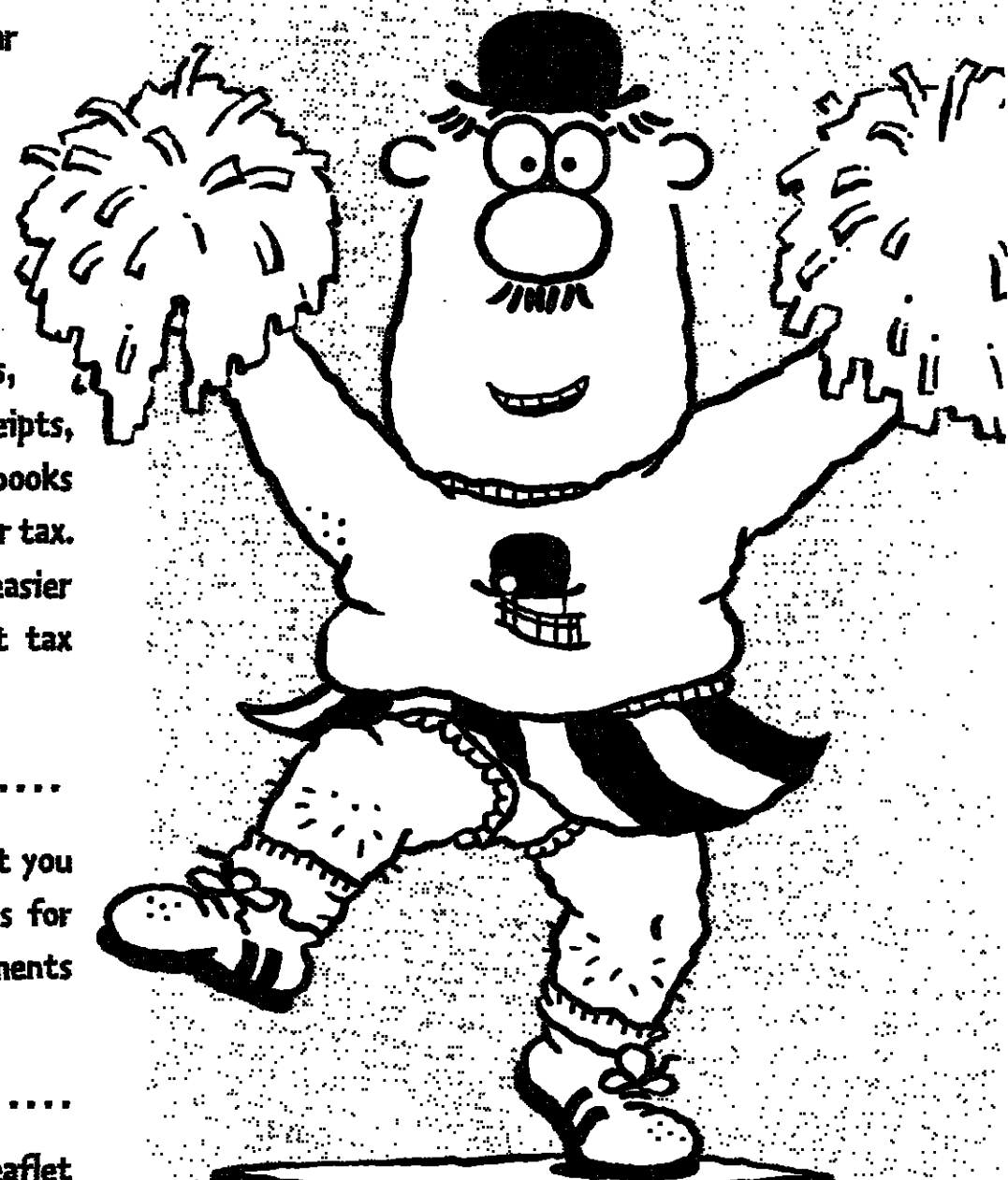
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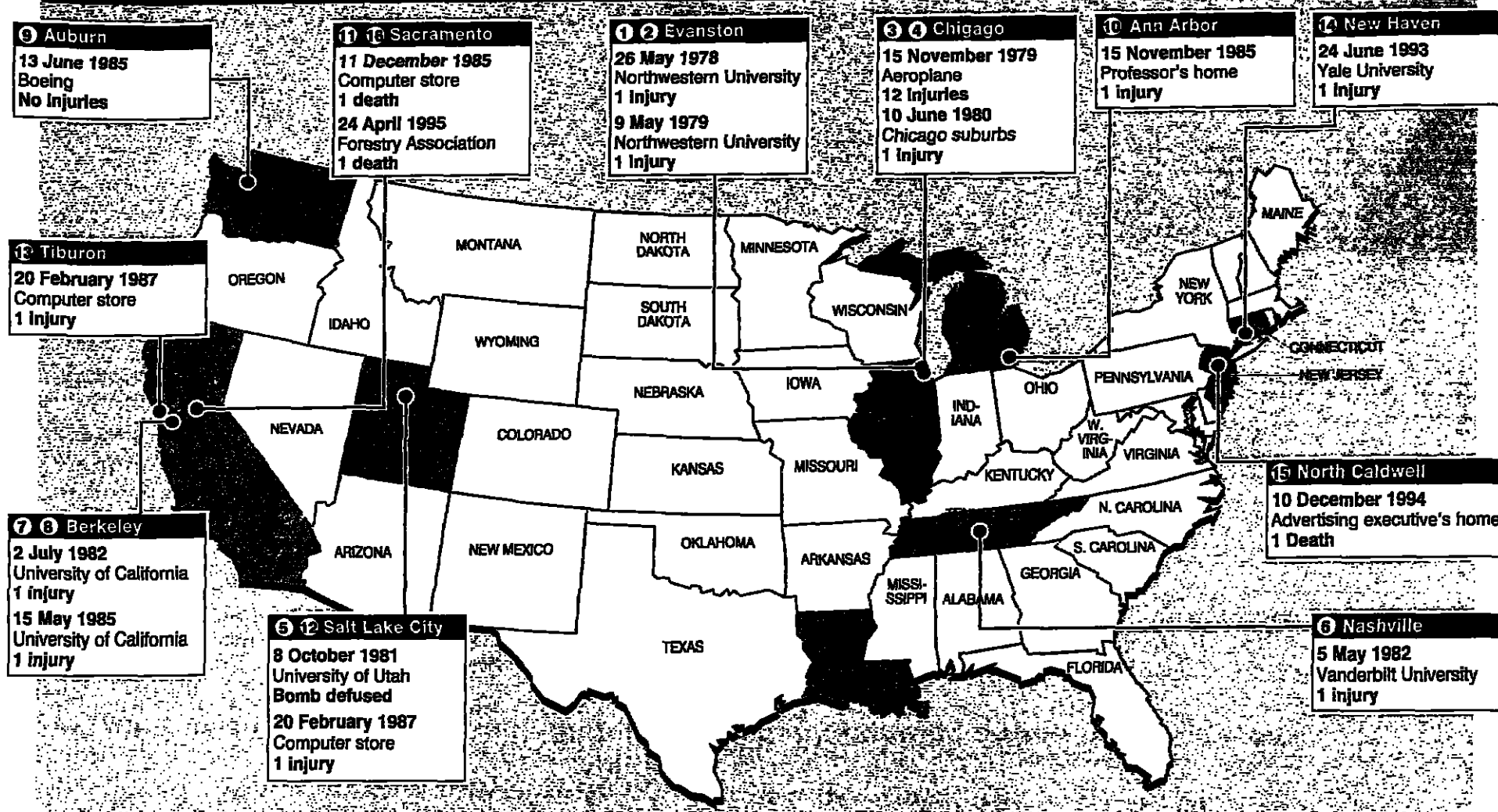


National Breakdown

The longest, most expensive hunt in FBI history has led to the empty heartlands

On the trail of terror: a bombing spree that left three dead

After 18

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Maybe the quest is finally over, and in a fashion as bizarre as this most extraordinary of cases deserves. Few criminals in recent times have caught America's imagination as has the "Unabomber", a Professor Moriarty among mail-bombers who for almost 18 years plied his trade from one end of the country to the other, defying - even mocking - every effort of the FBI to catch him.

Now the Feds seem to have got their man. The individual they have netted as their strongest suspect yet is not a big city crime shark protected by a shoal of attorneys, or a brutal killer from the backstreets. The longest and most expensive hunt in FBI history has led instead to the echoing, empty heartlands of the West, and a seemingly innocuous modern-day hermit in a brick and board shack.

For a dozen years now Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski has lived that way, without plumbing or electricity, using his excrement to fertilise his vegetable garden. He was a certified eccentric, a Harvard graduate who would ride a bicycle along the muddy roads into the remote Montana township of Lincoln (population 530), mainly to borrow what few

learned books were available at the public library. His beard was straggly, his clothes ill-fitting, often torn. People mostly liked him but left him alone, for Montana is a place where privacy is respected.

"I think most of us are rooting for this isn't the guy," said one of his neighbours, Larry Butler. "I don't believe it's him. If he's so educated, why did he live like that?" To which investigators have a simple answer. He lived like that because he was the Unabomber.

Only today will it be known, with certainty what crimes the 33-year-old Kaczynski will be charged with. But he fits the Unabomber's profile, elaborated by the FBI, with uncanny precision.

Just as the Bureau predicted he is a middle-aged white male well-educated and almost certainly with a failed university career behind him, who mostly shunned human society to concentrate on his two preferred pursuits: developing his theory of the calamity to which the industrial revolution was leading mankind - and killing people with devilishly constructed letter-bombs.

The Unabomber seems to have had special links with university life in three places: Chicago (where his family lives), Utah, and northern California. On each score Mr Kaczynski fits the bill. After

Belarus leader vows to expel Kremlin's foes

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

Adopting a harsh tone reminiscent of the Cold War, the hardline leader of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, yesterday threatened to expel diplomats and journalists who attended demonstrations against his policy of tighter integration with Russia.

"We have issued protests to a number of diplomats," he said in remarks likely to astonish Western embassies used to more relaxed working conditions since the collapse of the Soviet Union. "We will act here in unbending fashion as a sovereign and independent state. A diplomat must not march at the head of a demonstration."

Diplomats and reporters had been observing a protest by about 20,000 people who took to the streets of Minsk on Tuesday after Mr Lukashenko signed a treaty with President Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin creating a mini-common market of Russia and Belarus.

Mr Lukashenko was especially angry Russian television failed to point out he had banned street marches after a similar protest of Belarusian nationalists in March. "Active talks" had started with Russian television, he said. "These journalists will not be working here for many more days."

As for the Western media, they were "so worried about our democracy. If this had happened in your country, you would not have dealt with it in such a fashion," he said.

Along with Uzbekistan, where the KGB remains active,

Belarus is among the most conservative former Soviet republics. This is thanks to Mr Lukashenko, whose eccentric behaviour prompts comparison with Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

The Belarus leader censors the local media and has suspended trade unions. Last year, he angered Washington by failing to apologise when the Belarus air force shot down American civilian balloons who accidentally drifted over the republic's territory.

His dead hand has been particularly felt on the economy, which is so stagnant that the IMF has withdrawn support from Belarus. It is because of his republic's economic difficulties that he wants to move closer to Russia.

Tuesday's treaty stopped short of creating a single state but provided for co-ordinated foreign and defence policies and a common market in goods, services and labour. It was immediately criticised by economists in Moscow who said Mr Yeltsin, in his haste to convince voters he was matching Communist efforts to restore the old empire, exposed Russia to the danger of being milked by Belarus.

But there are signs Mr Yeltsin's passion might be cooling. On Tuesday, he and Mr Lukashenko called their new union the Commonwealth of Sovereign Republics, whose Russian acronym SSR is only one letter short of USSR (USSR). But alarmed by derisive press comment, Kremlin aides on Wednesday spoke only of a "Commonwealth Treaty".

Letters, page 20

North Korea fuels frontier war fears

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Tokyo

The 43-year-old military stand-off between North and South Korea grew more tense yesterday after the Communist North renounced its obligations in the demilitarised zone, which has separated the two armies since the Korean War ended in 1953.

South Korea warned it would retaliate against any military provocation following the announcement. After a meeting of security ministers, a defence ministry official said Seoul would not tolerate violations of the truce that ended the war.

A statement broadcast from Pyongyang announced the Korean People's Army, whose 1 million troops are massed close to the border, would "give up its duty, under the armistice agreement, concerning the maintenance and control of the military demarcation line and DMZ. Secondly, the KPA side shall... have its personnel and vehicles bear no distinctive

The consequences are not clear but in the short term it may make little difference. The armistice, which ended the three-year war, has become meaningless over the last few years, with both sides accusing each another of violations. The Military Armistice Council, the bilateral body responsible for monitoring the peace, has not met since 1994, when the North withdrew its mission.

But yesterday's announcement will fuel anxiety about the intentions of Pyongyang at a troubled moment in the North's history. Apart from uncertainties about the grip on power of its reclusive "Dear Leader", Kim Jong Il, parts of the country are on the verge of famine since disastrous floods last summer ruined the rice harvest.

In December, the KPA moved bombers close to the DMZ, which is only 50km from the South Korean capital, Seoul. Since the war ended no formal peace treaty has been signed. The armistice was a military ceasefire signed by generals and

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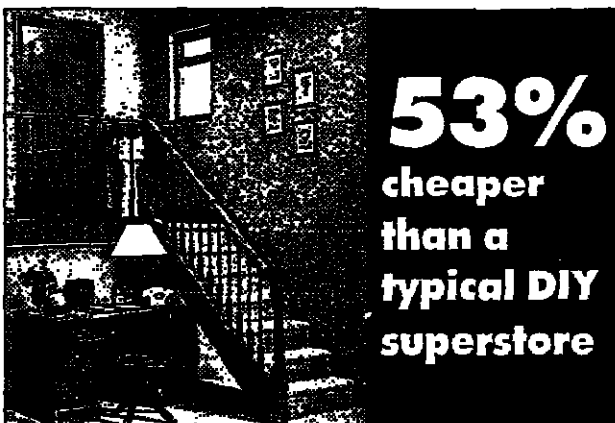
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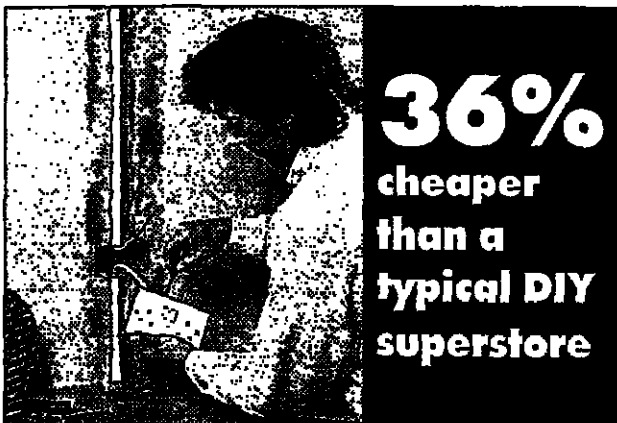
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Baseboard 2.4m	2	£39.98	£29.98	£10.00
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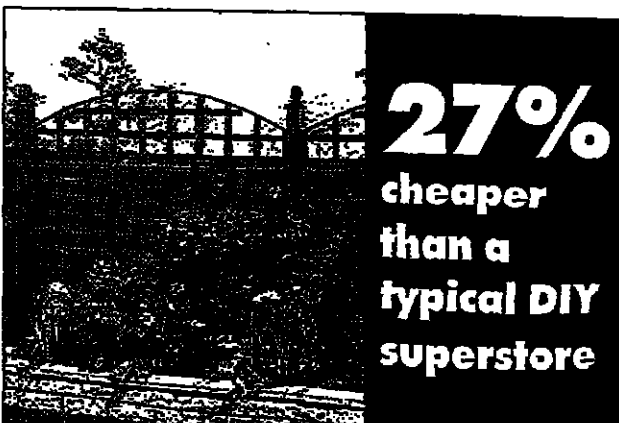
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7.5m x 2.5mm 6242Y Cable	1	£4.99	£3.99	£1.00
Isolator Switch 20A DP	1	£4.99	£3.99	£1.00
25mm 1 Gang Metal Box	1	99p	69p	30p
Grommets PK.25	1	£2.29	£1.99	30p
Oval Conduit 20mm x 2m	1	£1.19	79p	40p
Ready Mix Interior Filler 1 K	1	£2.19	£1.99	20p
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After 18 years, have they caught the Unabomber?

Harvard, he took courses at the University of Chicago, before earning a PhD in mathematics at the University of Michigan where his former professor described Kaczynski as "very serious and very intelligent". He lived in Salt Lake City for a while in the late 1970s and early 1980s. And before that, he had been an assistant mathematics professor at the University of California at Berkeley before leaving after two years, for reasons that are unclear. And if the police theory is correct, he also built bombs. The first attack was in 1978, a bomb addressed to Chicago University. The last of the 16 attributed to the Unabomber came a year ago. Sacramento, California, when Gilbert Murray, the President of the California Forestry Association, was killed as he opened a package at his office. The bombs grew in sophistication with the years, often aimed in skillfully carved wooden containers, sometimes with a trademark signature, "TC".

All the while, the police searched, but in vain. "Sometimes we'd get pretty close to him, especially in California in 1995," Lou Betram, a retired FBI agent who was on the Bureau's Unabomber task force in San Francisco, said yesterday. But then he'd go into hibernation, nothing would happen



Manhunt: An FBI artist's sketch of the Unabomber in 1994 (left); Ted Kaczynski's entry in the Harvard University yearbook for 1962

THEODORE JOHN KACZYNSKI

Born: May 22, 1942 in Chicago, Ill. Prepared at Evergreen Park H.S., Evergreen Park, Ill. Home Address: 9209 Lawndale, Evergreen Park, Ill. Field of Concentration: Mathematics. Scholarships and Prizes: Harvard College Scholarship.



for a while, the trail would grow cold."

But even Unabombers are not infallible. Exulting in his apparent mastery of the FBI, the master criminal made his mistake, in the form of a 35,000-word treatise on the "Future of Industrial Society", which he

submitted to the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. If they published the rambling, anti-technology manifesto, the writer said, he would cease his campaign. After much soul-searching, the two papers did so on 20 September 1995, on the advice of the FBI.

Relatives in Chicago were struck by similarities between some of Ted Kaczynski's earlier writings and the rambling musings of the Unabomber's tract, and eventually his brother informed the FBI. And so the trail of 18 years, dotted with 200 detained suspects along the

way, led to a hand-built cabin near the Continental divide. But the tale may not yet be over.

Barring a confession, or conclusive DNA tests on saliva from stamps affixed to the bomb packages, the FBI may yet have trouble in proving that Kaczynski is the Unabomber,

linking him with each of the 16 attacks. Indeed yesterday there were reports that the FBI had found evidence which could provide alibis in at least two of them. And if so, some people surely will secretly be glad. After all, what is life without a few unsolved mysteries?

Manifesto of the Unabomber

Excerpts from the Unabomber's 35,000-word manifesto, published in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* in September, 1995

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race. They have greatly increased the life expectancy of those of us who live in "advanced" countries, but they have destabilised society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world. The continued development of technology will worsen the situation. It will certainly subject human beings to greater indignities and inflict greater damage on the natural world, it will probably lead to greater social disruption...

We therefore advocate a revolution against the industrial system. This revolution may or may not make use of violence; it may be sudden or it may be relatively gradual. We can't predict any of that. But we do outline in a very general way the measures that those who hate the industrial system should take in order to prepare the way. This is not to be a POLITICAL REVOLUTION. Its object will be to overthrow not governments but the economic and technological basis of the present society.

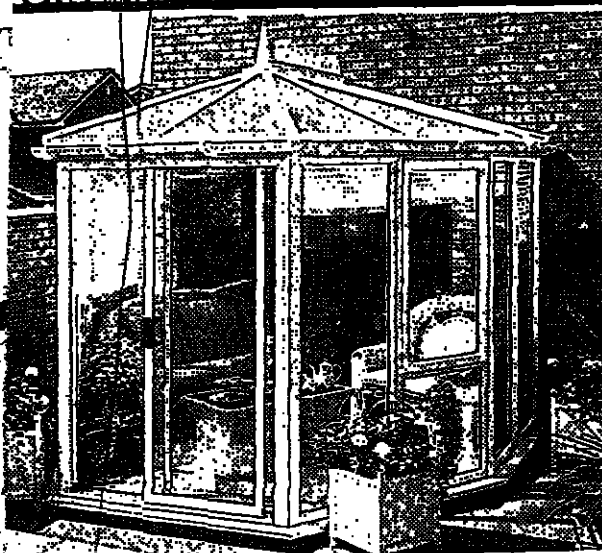
POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AND "LEFTISM"

When we speak of leftists we have in mind mainly socialists, collectivists, "politically correct" types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal-rights activists and the like... Many leftists have an intense identification with the problems of groups that have an image of being weak (women), defeated (American Indians), repellent (homosexuals) or otherwise inferior. The leftists themselves feel that these groups are inferior... but would never admit it.

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Running Outlet Black Roundline	2	£4.98
External Stopend Black Roundline	2	£2.58
Gutter Joint Bracket Black Roundline	4	£5.16
Gutter Support Bracket Black Roundline	14	£9.66
Downpipe Connector Black Roundline	2	£2.98
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Baltic states beg West to curb Russia

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Central Europe Correspondent

Vytautas Landsbergis, the champion of Lithuanian independence, yesterday called on the West to take a leaf out of Moscow's book and say "Nyet" to those in Russia who are openly pushing for the restoration of the Soviet Union.

Speaking to the *Independent*, Mr Landsbergis said all three Baltic states felt increasingly threatened by what they saw as a return to imperialistic thinking by their giant neighbour in the east.

Unless the West registered a strong protest now, he warned, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia may prove unable to resist being sucked back into a Moscow-dominated orbit, ending up as little more than satellite states.

"If this trend towards the 'reintegration' [of former Soviet republics] is not opposed strongly enough, Russia will see that as a signal it can proceed," he said. "It is time for a clear message from the West: 'Nyet' - 'No, Never again'."

Like many in the Baltics, Mr Landsbergis was alarmed by last month's vote in the Russian Duma, denouncing the dissolution of the old Soviet Union in late 1991.

He has watched anxiously as the former Soviet republics of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement aimed at forging closer economic ties and, earlier this week, as Russia and Belarus forged a closer political and military union.

"I was saddened to see the people of Belarus giving up the fight for self-determination," said Mr Landsbergis, a former musician who leapt to fame as the leader of Lithuania's bloody independence struggle in 1990-1991 and who, after a spell as President, now heads the opposition. "The danger for Lithuania has increased."

Although the drive to restore the Soviet Union is being spearheaded by Russian Communists, the cause has been taken up in part by President Boris Yeltsin, anxious to boost his chances in June's presidential election. It was President Yeltsin, after the agreement between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who said that "the new community is open to other states... maybe the Baltic states or perhaps, for example, Bulgaria."

Baltic leaders stress that after 50 years of enforced incorporation into the Soviet Union they have no interest in joining another Moscow-led alliance. Instead, they plan to redouble their efforts to join the European Union and Nato.

"If some of the former Soviet republics want to form a new union, that is up to them, but it is not what we want," said an Estonian foreign ministry spokesman. "The more pressure we feel coming from Russia, the more we want to bind our-

Officially, Baltic politicians regard membership of the EU and Nato as two sides of the same coin. Unofficially, however, some recognise that, given the scale of Russian objections to Nato's enlargement and their geographical position, they are unlikely to join the Western military alliance in the near future, if at all.

While not withdrawing their attempts to join Nato, some Baltic leaders are exploring the possibility of an alternative form of security guarantee from the West. They are also beginning to place more emphasis on the more realistic goal of EU membership, against which Russia has not expressed such fierce opposition.

"Our main priority must be to turn our economies round so



Landsbergis of Lithuania (above) and Laar of Estonia: West must block revival of Soviet Union



that, effectively, we actually do integrate with the West," said Mart Laar, the former Estonian prime minister who spearheaded what is widely seen as one of the most successful economic transformations in the former Communist bloc.

Of all the Baltic capitals, Tallinn, with its beautiful medieval heart, smart shops and boatloads of Finnish visitors, has moved the furthest away from the grey days of Soviet rule. To many people it looks as if it is already part of the West.

"We hope that by the time we join the EU it may well have a defence element," said Mr Laar, a member of the younger generation that is trying to take a less alarmist view of developments in Russia. "But in the end, it is foreign investment that really counts. If the West is prepared to put its money here, then that is a higher guarantee of our security than any num-

Wickes

THE EXPERTS IN HOME IMPROVEMENT

obituaries / gazette

Ron Brown

Ron Brown, who was killed in a plane crash in Croatia on Wednesday, was one of the most important of a new breed of black American politicians who succeeded not by playing the card of his race, but by his skills as a political organiser.

President Bill Clinton, who made Brown his Commerce Secretary, is known to have leaned heavily on his advice. At the same time, Brown's ambition and his pragmatism occasionally took him into dodgy areas. When he died he was under investigation for what amounted to bribery allegations, not for the first time, though he was cleared on the earlier occasion and strenuously denied the later charges; and his law firm represented the Duvalier regime in Haiti.

When he was chosen as the chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1989 he was the first black chairman of either major party in American history. He played a vital role making his election happen.

"He was one of the best advisers and the ablest people I ever knew," Clinton said of Brown yesterday, "and he was very, very good at everything he ever did."

After his 1992 victory, Clinton offered Brown the cabinet-level post of US ambassador to the United Nations. Brown turned it down, apparently because he thought it had become a stereotypical "black job". Instead he opted for being Secretary of Commerce.

Of recent years the Commerce Department has scarcely been at the centre of Washington's attention, and there have been proposals that it should be abolished. Ron Brown made it a power centre. Picking up the Clinton Administration's interest in aggressive campaigns for free trade, he saw the political potential of basing foreigners in the interests of protecting the jobs of those American industrial workers who are tempted to become Reagan or Buchanan Republicans because of their fear of unemployment.

Transforming the dowdy department building into a trendy post-modernist place full of fish-tanks and photographs of himself, Brown set a national target of doubling US exports to one trillion dollars by the end of the century. He claimed this would create 6 million new jobs in America.

He made it his special business to look for opportunities for American business in the world's trouble-spots. He paid repeated visits to South Africa, the West Bank and Northern Ireland. His philosophy was to reinforce peace negotiations with economic development – and to use American military and strategic power to generate opportunities for American business.

On the trip to Bosnia and Croatia which cost him his life, Brown was hoping to replace Airbus with Boeing as a supplier of airliners to the Croatian government. "Two weeks ago,"

he told Washington reporters shortly before leaving, "that was a done deal for Airbus. Just the fact that we are going has at least had the impact of getting Boeing back to the table."

His interventions were generally welcomed. Baroness Denton of Wakefield, the Northern Ireland Economy Minister, yesterday called Brown "a real mover and shaker". He organised the Washington investment conference on Northern Ireland last May and is credited with playing a major part in persuading President Clinton to visit Belfast last year.

Ron Brown was born in Washington in 1941 to a middle-class African-American family which later moved to Harlem. His father, a university graduate, was the manager of the famous Hotel Theresa, a Harlem landmark much frequented by black musicians and show-business types, and later served as an official in the Roosevelt Administration.

He was educated at Middlebury College in Vermont. While there he was invited to join a student fraternity as an associate member because of the colour of his skin. He agreed to join only on condition he became its first black full member, which obliged the fraternity to change its national constitution.

He did his law degree at St John's University in New York and then went to work for the Urban League, a civil rights organisation whose strategy has always been to work within the

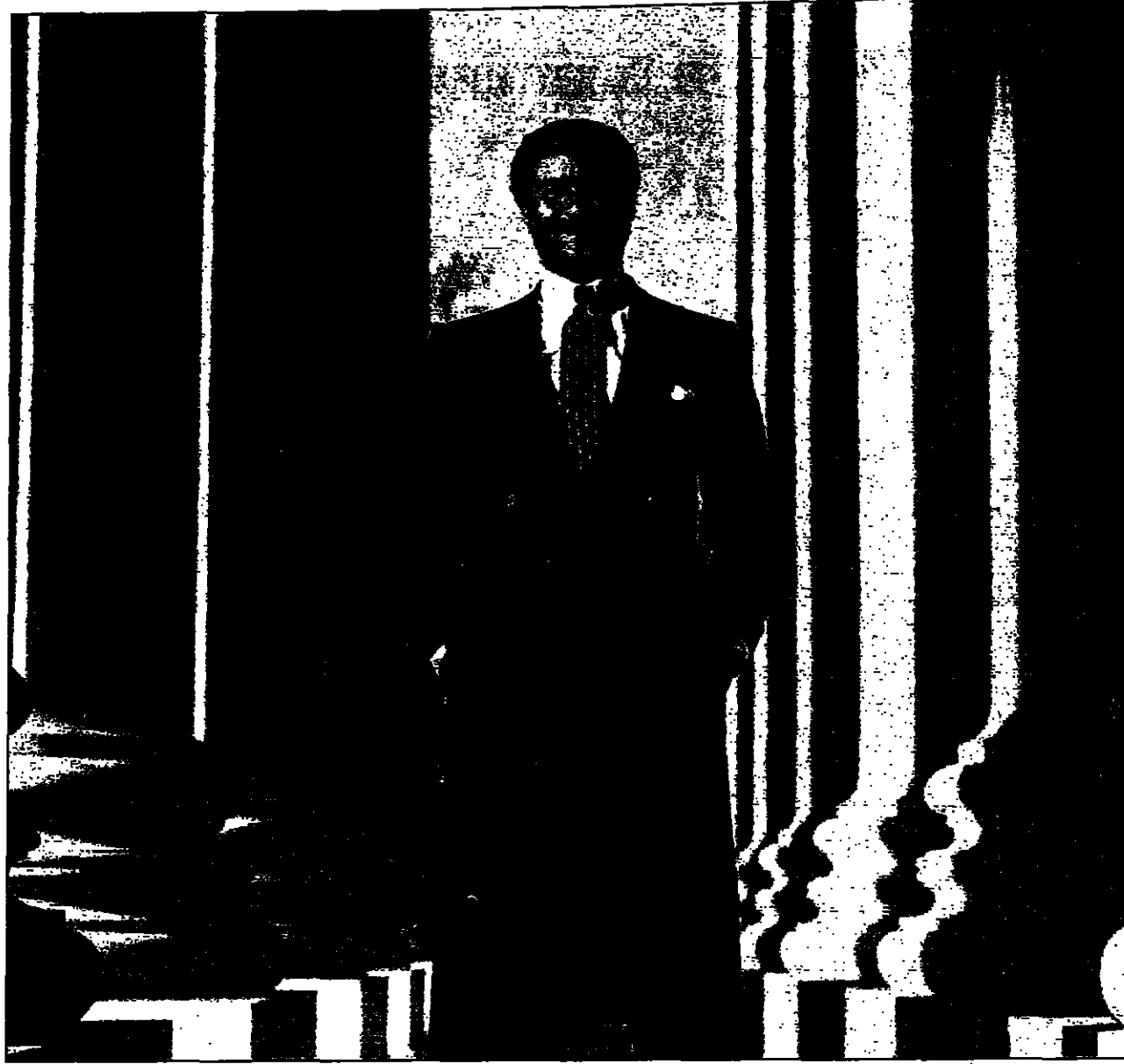
system. In 1980 he joined Senator Edward Kennedy's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. The following year he went to work for the Washington law-and-lobbying firm of Patton, Boggs and Blow. He was perfectly suited to the firm, with its deep network of connections in Congress, the Washington bureaucracies and the Democratic Party around the country.

Brown's function in the firm was as a "rainmaker", to bring in wealthy clients. In law practice and in politics Ron Brown was the ultimate pragmatist. His instinctive political sympathies were with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and he worked for the Rev Jesse Jackson in the 1984 and 1988 campaigns.

In fact, Brown had drawn from the experience of 1980 the conclusion that the Democrats must not be divided. Even as an impeccably dressed, opulently fed lawyer-around-Washington pulling down a huge salary, and as a high-flying cabinet member and presidential adviser, Brown continued to argue for policies to help ordinary working Americans, black or white.

Godfrey Hodgson

Ronald Harmon Brown, lawyer and politician: born Washington DC 1 August 1941; US Secretary of Commerce 1993-96; married 1962 Alma Arrington (one son, one daughter); died Dubrovnik, Croatia 3 April 1996.



"One of the ablest people I ever knew". Brown was President Clinton's Secretary of Commerce from 1993. Photograph: Neil Laffer / Time

Dr Richard Mackarness

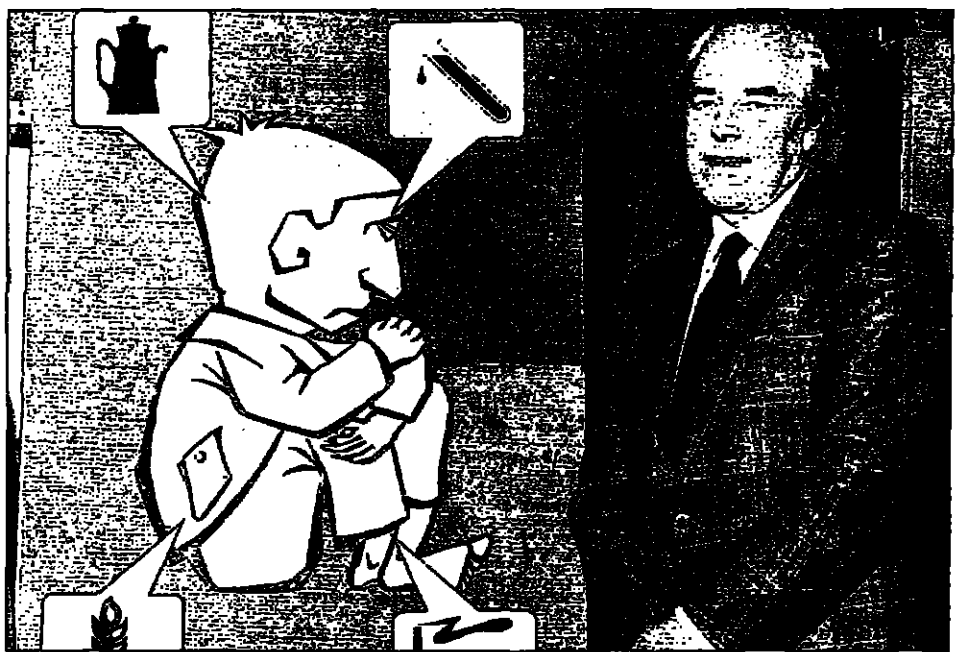
Richard Mackarness was a physician of great vision, a man of original mind who, though much frustrated by the scepticism in his own profession, fought with some success for the recognition in Britain of "Clinical Ecology". By his own example and as a doctor bringing relief to many people, he established that food allergies can be the cause of a variety of illnesses.

In *Not All in the Mind* (1976), Mackarness described the case of Joanna D, a young woman patient referred to him for treatment in May 1973. She had been admitted to hospital many times following outbreaks of violence to herself and her children. Dietary treatment restored her completely to a normal life free of drugs. She remains a splendid vindication of Mackarness's cause.

The *Lancet* commented on his methods, results and conclusions on 3 February 1979: "Clearly food intolerance can produce widespread symptoms in susceptible individuals, and many patients with troublesome and hitherto intractable symptoms can now be helped."

Not All in the Mind was a kind of "do-it-yourself" manual for those who suffered food-related allergies but failed to find doctors prepared to take them seriously. The basic principle was for patients to try for several days without their usual foods, and then reintroduce them one by one. If one was the cause of their allergy, they would suffer a strong reaction to it.

Mackarness was born in 1916 in Murree, India, in what is now Pakistan. His parents came originally from Scarborough. His father worked in government service as Conservator of Forests. At the age of six Richard was taken to England to be raised by a widowed aunt with five children, who became as close to him as brothers and



A born agitator: Mackarness in 1981, with the logo he designed for AAA (Action Against Allergy)

sisters. He was educated at Westminster College and at the Westminster Teaching Hospital. He then temporarily abandoned medicine for a course in drawing and painting at the Westminster Art School. There followed a short spell in Bombay as an illustrator and artist for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. At the outbreak of the Second World War he returned to Britain to enlist in the Army, but was directed to finish his medical studies. On qualifying in 1941, he was commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to the rank of captain.

After the war he took a number of hospital jobs, then became an illustrator and artistic adviser in an educational film company – where he met his wife, Margaret ("Hitty") Perry-Walker. He returned to full-time medical practice, first in

Fulham, and from 1947 in Kew. His first book, *Eat Fat and Grow Slim* (1958), exposed the "calorie fallacy" and proposed a non-carbohydrate "Stone Age" diet of protein and fat with no restriction as to the amount eaten. The book was immensely popular and went through six editions. While promoting it in Chicago, Mackarness met Dr Ted Rudolph, the "father" of food and inhalant allergy who had started the "Clinical Ecology" treatment in the United States. Rudolph suggested to Mackarness that he too might benefit from finding out what he was allergic to, and thereby alleviate his tiredness.

The Rudolph treatment proved so successful that Mackarness returned to England resolved to use it to help some of his difficult patients and to spread the word to other doctors. But his colleagues were

suspicious of the then unfamiliar idea that diet could cure allergic manifestations, or of the suggestion of a connection between diet and mental illness. Mackarness had a flair for writing and from the 1950s contributed a medical column first to the *News Chronicle* and then, on that newspaper's closure in 1960, to the *Daily Mail*. The strain of running a general practice combined with journalism eventually became too much, however, so in 1965 Mackarness accepted a position as a psychiatric registrar at the Park Prewett Mental Hospital, Basingstoke, where he stayed for the next 16 years. On completing the Diploma in Psychiatric Medicine, he was appointed to the permanent psychiatric staff.

It was a breakthrough for Mackarness that the first and only NHS Clinical Ecology Unit

was opened at the Park Prewett Hospital while he was there. There was a rush for treatment, long queues because of the lack of NHS doctors able to advise on the subject disheartened him. He helped to found "Action Against Allergy" – now a world-wide pressure group.

He expanded on the theme of food and chemical allergies in *Chemical Victims* (1980), which dealt with the chemicals in the environment that cause migraine, depression, fatigue, skin troubles, bowel disorders, and with modern medicine's vain efforts to stem the tide by increased prescription of drugs and ever more complex surgery.

He gave the income from his two bestsellers, *Not All in the Mind* and *Chemical Victims*, to the Chemical Victims Association, which he also founded. His last book, written in Australia, was *A Little of What You Fancy* (1985), in which he showed how addiction to smoking, alcohol, even to coffee, can be gradually controlled.

On his retirement in 1981 Mackarness and his wife moved to Australia to be near their son, Patrick; he continued his medical work at an Alcohol and Drug Dependency Unit and took up painting again. Sadly, in 1984 his wife died of cancer.

Richard Mackarness was an exceptional man of many talents; above all he was modest and humble, though a fighter and a born agitator, as he said of himself. He listened to his patients. He restored the quality of life to thousands suffering misery. He was a true healer.

Roland Hill

Guy Richard Godfrey Mackarness, physician and writer: born Murree, India 17 August 1916; married 1947 Margaret Perry-Walker (died 1984; one son); died Morningside, Australia 18 March 1996.

E. V. Morgan

E. V. Morgan researched in and made substantial contributions to several areas of economics. He was particularly interested in monetary and financial institutions and monetary policy, and in international trade.

His work on monetary policy established his importance. There his contributions were remarkable. In 1957 Peter Thorneycroft, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had established the Radcliffe Committee to appraise the importance of monetary policy. The major conclusion of the committee's report, produced in 1959, was that money did not matter in economic policy; for, if the Government attempted to control it, substitutes would emerge so rapidly that the attempt at control would prove pointless. Thus the advice was that monetary policy was of no importance, and that monetary control would not lead to inflation control.

Victor Morgan dissented strongly from this fashionable establishment view. He set out his dissent first in his contribution to a collection of essays by notable economists, *Not Unanimous – a Rival Verdict to Radcliffe's on Money*, published in 1960 by the Institute of Eco-

nomics Affairs. In his essay, "Money – Theory", Morgan attacked three popular beliefs. He criticised willingness to allow inflation in the belief that it was inseparable from real growth; he condemned the Government's failure either to impose on itself or accept from outside any form of anti-inflationary discipline; and he attacked the reluctance to tolerate fluctuations in short-term interest rates.

Had these views been listened to, Britain's subsequent inflation experience would have been much less damaging. Morgan developed his ideas still further in another IEA paper, published in 1964, *Monetary Policy for Stable Growth*. In this he proposed greater autonomy for the Bank of England in the conduct of monetary policy, the introduction of a rule for the rate of growth of the money supply, and giving up the subsection of all objectives of economic policy to the ill-defined good of "full employment".

Both Morgan's life and his career were remarkable. He was born with exceptionally poor eyesight, and this severely hampered his learning when a child. His mother, however, had been a teacher, and she taught him until he went to Warwick School. From there he went on to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

This in itself was a great achievement for someone who as a child it was thought would never be able to lead a normal life. But he followed it up with a series of teaching posts at various universities. His first was as a lecturer in economics at University College, Swansea. Five years later, in 1945, when only 30 years old, he became Professor there. In 1966 he moved to a Chair at Manchester University and in 1974 to one

at Reading where he stayed until 1981.

Among his books were *The Stock Exchange* (written with W.A. Thomas, 1962), *A History of Money* (1965), *The Economics of Public Policy* (1972), *Banking Systems and Monetary Policy in the EEC* (with Richard Harrington and George Zis, 1974), *Personal Savings and Wealth in Britain* (1975) and *Capital Markets in the EEC* (with Richard Harrington, 1976).

In those and in all his writings Morgan showed a firm grasp of economic analysis, and a clear understanding both of how to use economic data and of the limitations of the data. Not only did he display these qualities in his writing he was also an eager participant in academic debate. In seminars he was to be seen peering at a manuscript from only an inch or two away, to emerge with a question almost sure to disconcert the paper's author, sometimes by showing an error in his analysis but more often – Morgan was a kind and generous man – drawing out an important implication that the author himself had overlooked. He was also a lucid lecturer, and a writer of clear and rigorous prose.

Victor Morgan was an economist whose work, whether written or spoken, always merited the closest attention. Much was always to be learned from his profound scholarship.

Geoffrey Wood

Edward Victor Morgan, economist: born Harbury, Warwickshire 27 October 1915; Professor of Economics, University College, Swansea 1945-66; Professor of Economics, Manchester University 1966-74; Professor of Economics, Reading University 1974-81; twice married (two children); died 10 March 1996.



Morgan: monetary policy

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

RODGART: On 3 April, at Brighton General Hospital, Professor Matthew John Caldwell, aged 79. Very dear husband of Patricia and father of Jane and Stephen and stepfather of Suzanne. Private cremation. Family flowers only.

WHITFIELD: Dr Phillip, of Peebles, Scotland. On 4 April 1996, after a short illness. GP, paediatrician, poet and creative thinker, greatly loved and loving husband of Pauline, father of Jeremy, Judith, Miranda, Kate and Nicole and grandfather of 11 grandchildren. Robin Hill, 2 Eastgate, Peebles.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

GAVIN: A service of thanksgiving for the life of Edmund Gavin will be held at St Paul's Church, Wilton Place, Knightsbridge, on 20 April, at 12 noon.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriams) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephoned on 0171-253 2811 or faxed on 0171-253 2810, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11 a.m. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30 a.m. Band provided by the Irish Guards.

Birthdays

Professor John Albery, Master of University College, Oxford, 60; Vice Admiral Sir Neil Anderson, former Chief of Defence Staff (New Zealand), 69; Miss Jane Asher, actress, 50; Mr Michael Bryant, actor, 68; Mr Andrew Davies, chairman, Barclays Bank, 57; Mr Allan Clarke, rock singer, 54; Mr Roger Corman, film director and producer, 70; Baroness Delacourt-Smith of Altermyn, 80; Mr John Dick, former director, N.M. Rothschild & Sons, 85; Miss Agnetha Fältskog, former singer with Abba, 46; Mr Tom Finney, footballer, 74; Dr John Gilbert MP, 69; Mr Arthur Hailey, author, 76; Mr Nigel Hawthorne, actor, 67; Sir Douglas Hedley, former Auditor-General, 77; Professor Denis Lawton, Chairman, London University School Examinations Board, 65; Admiral Sir Michael Livesey, former Chief of Naval Personnel, 60; Professor Donald Lynden-Bell, astronomer, 61; Professor Peter Moore, former Principal, London Business School, 68; Mr Stanley Orme MP, 73; Mr Gregory Peck, actor, 80; Miss Jennifer Peoney, ballerina, 50; General Colin Powell, former chairman, American Joint Chiefs of Staff, 59; Lord Rockley, chairman, Kleinwort Benson, 62; Miss Anne Scott-James, author and journalist, 83.

Anniversaries

Births: Thomas Hobbes, philosopher, 1588; John Wilson, lutenist, singer and composer, 1595; Elhan Yalc, merchant, administrator and founder of Yale College, 1649; Giovanni Giacomo Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt, lover and adventurer, 1724; Jean-Honoré Fragonard, painter, 1732; Sebastian Ernst, piano and harp maker, 1752; Ludwig Spohr, vi-

olin virtuoso and composer, 1784; Sir Henry Flavelock, general, 1795; Jules Dupré, landscape painter, 1811; Sydney Thompson Dobell, poet, 1824; Joseph Lister, first Baron Lister, surgeon and pioneer of antiseptics in surgery, 1827; Jules-François Camille Ferry, statesman, 1832; Algernon Charles Swinburne, poet, 1837; Albert Charles Paul-Marie Rousset, composer, 1869; Spencer Tracy, actor, 1900; Bette (Ruth Elizabeth) Davis, actress, 1908; Desha Williams Brouncker, second Viscount Brouncker, first President of the Royal Society, 1684; Georges-Jacques Danton, French revolutionary leader, guillotined 1794; Robert Raikes, founder of Sunday Schools, 1811; Paul Vidal de la Blache, geographer, 1918; George Easton Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, fifth Earl of Carnarvon, Egyptologist, 1923; Jane Ellen Harrison, scholar and archaeologist, 1928; Douglas MacArthur, general, 1904; Howard Robard Hughes, aviator, industrialist and film producer, 1905; Chiang Kai-shek, Chinese statesman and soldier, 1874; Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Travers Harris, former chief of Bomber Command, 1904. On this day the Adhikar Parvati festival (which made no enunciations) began sitting, 1614; the French army of Italy was defeated by the Austrians at the Battle of Magnano, 1799; Strauss's opera *Die Fledermaus* was first performed, Vienna 1874; Oscar Wilde was arrested for offences committed with Lord Alfred Douglas, 1895; an attempt was made to assassinate the Prince of Wales in Brussels, 1900; the Observer newspaper was acquired by W.W. (later Lord) Astor, 1911; the Daily Express chose a Sinn Féin Executive, with Eamon de Valera as president, 1919; Sir Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister, 1955; the first atomic bomb

automatic trains ran on the London Underground, 1964; the Cunard liner *Queen Elizabeth* was sold to an American syndicate for £3.23m, 1968; in Sicily, Mount Etna erupted, followed by violent flows of lava, 1971; Sir Harold Wilson resigned as Prime Minister, 1976. Today is Good Friday and the Feast Day of St Albert of Montecorvino, St Derfel-Gadarn, St Ethelburga of Lyminge, St Gerald of Saone-Majore and St Vincent Ferrer.

RAF College Cranwell

Air Marshal Sir John Cheshire, UK Military Representative, Headquarters Nato, was the Reviewing Officer at the Graduation of 89 officers of No 160 Initial Officer Training Course and 10 officers of No 260 Specialist Entrain and Re-entrain Course yesterday from the RAF College Cranwell, Stamford, Lincolnshire.

Appointments

Mr Christopher Crabtree, to be Ambassador to Bucharest. Mr Donald Hugh Stevenson Conway, to be a full-time Immigration Adjudicator, designated a Special Adjudicator. Mr Andrew Thomas and Mr David Slater, to be members of the Legal Aid Board. Mr Brian Walsh QC, to be a circuit judge, assigned to the North Eastern Circuit, and to be the Senior Circuit Judge in Leeds. Mr Philip Carr, Mr Jeremy George Connor, Mr David Francis Effer QC, Mr Michael John Carroll, Mr Richard Michael Hayward and Mr Robert Wakefield, to be circuit judges, assigned to the South Eastern Circuit.

God save us from the God who interveres

On Good Friday it is important to ask how a declining church contemplates the death of Christ.

Grace Davis is one of the chroniclers of that decline. She illuminates our plight in a wry account of an interview which went like this:

"Do you believe in God?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe in a God who intervenes to change the course of events on earth?"

"No, just the ordinary one."

That hurts, if we let it. But a chastened church might find a renewal of faith in the ordinary God who is revealed in Christ's death.

Conventional belief bawls at God for recognition and for intervention. This is embarrassingly true of the teeming mass of Christian practice in history, from European painted plaster Baroque through American Honky-Tonk Gothic, to contemporary hi-tech hoopla. The noise! The people!

Our conflicting brands of fervour can be shaming. The embarrassment becomes the shudder when the show turns up in your own town. The minister of the Castlemilk estate in Glasgow was once describing how a cross had been rescued from the debris of a demolished Glasgow hospital. He brandished the great brass cross from the pulpit in impressive demonstration.

I asked him later – if the wreckage had revealed a crucifix, would he have waved that about in the Kirk? Pass. If, as Hans Kung says, the death of Christ is the sign of Christianity, each church still

Arguments for Easter

The Rev John Kennedy reflects today on the lessons that the death of Jesus holds for a church which, in Europe at least, appears to be shrinking as the millennium approaches.

seems to think that the others are peddling forgeries.

Our clamour for deliverance from the pains of fate and death has an unfortunate implication. What happens to those who do not clamour, or do it in the wrong tone? Do they deserve to suffer the ravages of fate and the torments of eternal death? For our excluding instincts infect even our most beloved texts. From outside, one favourite text actually implies that God so hated the world, that whoever does not believe in the prescribed way, should suffer that eternal doom. There's a thought to stop us in our tracks. But that is what the death of Christ is supposed to do – to make us repent, not just of our manifold wickedness but of our self-righteous complacency. God save us from the God who intervenes.

So the crisis of European Christendom might lead us to be bolder as we shape ourselves for the third millennium, not least in our understanding of the death of

Christ. As our parish shrinks, perhaps we can risk being less parochial. After all, when we were struggling, embattled Loyalist sect, God gave us astonishing qualities of spiritual imagination. Or, for bears in Christ saw his death not as a for the faithful, but for all creation; was they who imagined Christ as "crucified from before the foundation of the earth". They saw Christ not as Lord of the Church but of all things. For the meaning of the death of Christ are many; here is one. Jesus was not killed by God, or by the Jews. Jesus was killed by us, to show that we too must love one another or die. The Church, however, in turn such a universal truth into a piece of religious property.

European Christianity may indeed decline for a while into a phenomenon of mainly historical interest. But the modern world will be manageable only if it combines a passionate sense of our common humanity with a thoroughly unimpaired expectation of the humankind. That is a demanding discipline which Christians have learned from the Christ who died at the hands of, and for the sake of, that humanity.

Meanwhile, we should use the time of our humiliation to explore God's commitment in Christ to all His people; perhaps sometimes in the next millennium we shall think it blasphemous to call for His intervention on the part of our own religious faction. Then we shall have learnt to praise the ordinary God, whose real nature has always been most clearly shown in the death of Christ.

APR 11 2015

Resurrection revisited

Arguments over the Resurrection have raged back and forth for nearly 2,000 years. At first, people doubted whether it did happen. Later, with the rise of modern science, people believed that it could not have happened. But now, argues **Andrew Brown**, these questions have subtly changed: we realise no facts can be known without faith

The discovery last week of a chest in which the bones of someone named Jesus, son of Joseph, may have been stored alongside those of two Marys, a Matthew, and a Juda, son of Jesus, almost certainly adds nothing to anyone's understanding of what actually occurred after the crucifixion. But it has already been seized upon as ammunition in the war between believers, half-believers and unbelievers.

In Christian countries, three views have been held about the Resurrection in modern times. They can be put crudely. The first is that Christ's tomb was empty. His body had been resurrected and was later physically encountered by his followers, so proving the truth of his claims about himself. The second is that his body rotted, proving the falsehood of Christian beliefs about him. The third is that we cannot by the methods of history discover for sure what happened to his body, but what matters is the effects of the belief that the Resurrection had happened.

The most vivid, and widely misunderstood expression of this last view was provided by the former Bishop of Durham, Dr David Jenkins, when he said that the Resurrection "was not just a conjuring trick with bones", although, like many a better philosopher, he never managed to explain quite what it was.

The clearest contradiction of this came from his successor, the Rt Rev Michael Turnbull, when his appointment to Durham was announced, who said that if you had had a video camera at the time and pointed it at the tomb, you would have seen it empty, and outside it, visible on the tape, the figure of the risen Jesus talking to the women, just as Mark's Gospel says in what most scholars agree is the earliest description of the event, written perhaps 40 years later.

[Mark 16:2] "Very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another: 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?' And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them: 'Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him'."

That is the first description of the Resurrection. It is not the first assertion that it happened. That comes in one of the letters of Paul, written before any of the Gospels, in around 50AD:

[1 Cor 15:3] "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

This wording, says Dr Tom Wright, the Dean of Lichfield Cathedral conceals an important point in an oral culture: Paul, when he says that the knowledge "has been delivered to him", is promising that his account is accurate and authentic. He is putting forward the names of the other people to whom Jesus appeared as references, so to say, of his own experience.

This traditional view has an opposite, namely that the Resurrection was a fraud, perpetrated by the first disciples, perhaps unconsciously, because they could not bear the disappointment of all their hopes and love when Jesus was killed. This is first raised in St Matthew's Gospel, in which the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb are ordered: "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep' and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day."

In other words, a video camera, pointed at the tomb, would have shown a group of disciples rolling away the stone, dragging the body away into the night.

Given that all this happened roughly 1,966 years ago, it seems at first surprising that anything new could be added by modern science to these disputes. In fact, archaeology, history and science have all been pressed into service in the modern reruns of these arguments.

For Tom Wright, the historic evidence points towards the truth of the Resurrection and of the empty tomb, if only because it is unlikely that a mere hallucination could have had such tremendous effects. "There were lots of messianic movements between 50BC and 150AD and in all cases they ended with the violent death of the Saviour proving that he was not the Messiah. Why did the Christians alone believe that the Messiah had come even after he had been killed?"

But historical inquiry of this sort has traditionally been used as a weapon against Christian orthodoxy and still is. The "Jesus Seminar", for example, a group of American scholars, is determined to produce an edition of the sayings of Jesus which can be trusted as authentic, and one of their principles of selection is that any of the Gospel sayings where he seems to be identifying himself as the Son of God, in the sense that later Christian orthodoxy would interpret the phrase, is a later accretion.

According to the mainstream of this search for a historic figure beneath the

Gospels, Jesus himself, as a pious itinerant rabbi and exorcist, would have thought it blasphemous or insane to claim he was the second person of the Trinity. This view is put most forcefully in this country by the Jewish scholar Hyam Maccoby, who in a series of books has argued that Christianity as we know it was essentially the invention of St Paul, and that Jesus as a devout, if mistaken, Jew would have been

horrified by the use made of his message after his death.

However, this is not the only reinterpretation of Jesus on offer in the light of 20th-century understandings.

Nicholas Lash, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, believes that post-modernism has made the Resurrection narratives easier to understand: "Post-modernism should mean, and sometimes does, that we are



Resurrection of Christ, 1570-75 by Veronese. The Bridgeman, Gemaldegalerie, Dresden

It had absolutely no space for narrative: if you told a story, it was only to illustrate a point.

"The balance of evidence is to me that they did find the tomb empty. But that is a historical question, not a theological one."

The tangle of theology and history is at the heart of all these arguments. The Resurrection cannot be understood as either purely historical or purely theological, according to Professor Lash. "St Thomas Aquinas asked whether it would have been 'fitting' for the disciples to witness the Resurrection: in other words, whether the Bishop with a video camera would have seen anything; and his answer, in the end, was that 'the disciples did see him rising, when, with the eyes of faith, they saw living him whom they knew dead.'"

This position can seem close to some modern attempts to explain away all miracle in the Bible on the grounds that what really happened was perfectly natural but had been misunderstood by ignorant Galilean peasants. However, post-modernist Christianity would say that a miracle can never be reduced to an event: a miracle is an event with a meaning. A rain of miniature winged pigs on Beckenham, however improbable, would not qualify as a miracle unless it also demonstrated God's nature.

Many Christian scientists, such as Dr Fraser Watts, a psychologist who is the first holder of the Starbridge chair in Science and Theology at the University of Cambridge, are reluctant to talk about miracles as breaking the laws of nature.

"I don't want to talk about the suspension of the laws of nature; rather about their transcendence," he says.

Dr Watts believes his own studies into consciousness provide a hint into how such a transcendence might exist. "As nature develops and becomes increasingly complex, particularly in the context of the human brain, which is the most complex thing known to us, new properties such as consciousness develop. And consciousness, in turn, transforms the processes from which it has arisen, so that thoughts can leave their mark on the physical structures of the brain."

"In a similar way, the Resurrection could involve a transformation of the natural creation, not just a freaky spiritual event. Scientific progress has provided us with a model or analogy which enables us to begin to make sense of such things. It is not an explanation, but it is a better model than we had 100 years ago; and it is certainly not science showing us that the Resurrection is impossible."

Most arguments about the Resurrection could only be settled by the reappearance of the body in question. Yet the argument does progress. During most of the past 150 years, it seemed obvious that the story must have some relation to "what really happened"; that somewhere beneath or behind the words of the Gospels was a set of facts that could settle the wrangling for ever. Now, we are less confident that facts of this sort have ever existed anywhere. Facts come only embedded in stories; and the facts of the Resurrection cannot, we now understand, ever be seen without preconceptions.



Jerusalem diary

Fire and frenzy in the chapel

The most appealing ceremony in Jerusalem over Easter is the ceremony of the Holy Fire, when the Greek Orthodox patriarch and the Armenian bishop enter the Holy Sepulchre itself to receive fire from heaven. As many as 20,000 pilgrims - including ageing but aggressive Greek ladies armed with folding metal stools and Egyptian Copts in long white robes - crowd into the church to see the ceremony. The fire is handed out through a hole in the wall of the chapel over the Holy Sepulchre and the church blazes with light as each pilgrim lights a bundle of 33 candles.

The ceremony, first mentioned in the ninth century, is one of the oldest in Jerusalem. Robert Curzon, the English traveller, was in Jerusalem for Easter in 1834, and described how "the people in their frenzy put the bunches of lighted tapers to their faces, hands and breasts to purify themselves from their sins". It is all a little tamer today, but before the Bolshevik revolution a ship waited in Jaffa to take the sacred fire to Russia.

The number of people who crowd into the church makes attendance somewhat nerve-racking. Last year I watched from the safety of the Armenian gallery. When Robert Curzon attended 150 years ago there was a panic among the pilgrims, exacerbated by the guards of the Egyptian viceroy, Ibrahim Pasha, who thought they were under attack. Curzon, who just escaped with his life, wrote: "I saw full 400 unhappy people, dead and living, heaped promiscuously one upon the other, in some places about five feet high."

Riot squad charges marching scouts

The Jerusalem riot squad was quick to set the tone for the Easter festivities. Latin Christians traditionally mark Palm Sunday with a march, led by boy and girl scouts in red and navy blue

berets, into the Old City. Israeli checkpoints around Jerusalem kept numbers down to about 500 this year. Instead of the usual 4,000, by stopping scouts entering Jerusalem from nearby Christian villages.

As the marchers, waving palm fronds, walked beside the Ottoman walls, they began to spill off the pavement into the main road. The riot squad knows what to do in a situation like this. Before the proud parents

of the scouts, they charged the procession, waving their batons and sending small girls, who had been peacefully banging large drums, scurrying for safety.

In defence of the Jerusalem police, it could be said that the ethnic or religious persuasion of peaceable marchers, voters or protesters makes no difference to them. Recently, they were in action against Ethiopian Jews who were protesting because it had just been revealed that their contributions to the blood bank had been routinely thrown away for fear of Aids.

With other journalists I stood on top of some concrete tubs, used for growing flowers, for a better view. Unfortunately, this was exactly where the Ethiopians broke through. They were still peaceful until a policeman standing beside me squirted them with tear gas. Part of this went straight into my face. By the time I came to, 20 minutes later, Jerusalem's finest had provoked one of the city's nastiest riots.

Cross words over a gold medallion

The menace and the charm of Jerusalem is that it is full of people who detest each other but are compelled, for the moment, to live together. The main

division is between Israeli and Palestinian, but every religious and ethnic group watches its rivals with the deepest suspicion. When the municipality circulated a draft design of a gold medallion to celebrate the capture of the city by King David 3,000 years ago, it got a hostile response from the ultra-orthodox Jews. They pointed out that among the religious monuments shown on the medal was the Russian Church on the Mount of Olives, with crosses topping its onion domes. They demanded these be removed immediately. The municipality compromised by removing four of the crosses and shrinking a fifth so that it is barely distinguishable.

Restaurants rebel at kosher crackdowns

In the ultra-orthodox districts of Jerusalem like Mea She'arim, where local people wear fur hats and the dress of 18th century Poland, there have been cauldrons full of scalding water in the streets in the days before Passover. This makes it easier to carry out the ritual cleaning of all cooking vessels under kosher rules. People clean out their cars to remove any crumbs of unleavened bread and avoid beer and other drinks made with yeast.

Passover is a moment of deep concern for Jerusalem restaurateurs. Rabbinical inspectors who issue kosher certificates - essential for most restaurants in West

Jerusalem - are particularly tough on those who have left any cooking implement uncleansed. Last year one restaurant was ordered to close for two days by rabbinical decree when inspectors found a spoon that had not been properly cleaned.

None of this goes down well with the restaurants, who say the fees charged by the inspectors eat into their small profits. One owner complained that last year he was even ordered to remove Christmas trees from outside his restaurant on the grounds that they were unkosher. He demanded that the inspectors show him rabbinical authority for their ruling. Nevertheless, a surprising number of international brands now carry kosher certificates, including even the saki served in the Sakura, Jerusalem's best Japanese restaurant.

The last time they found Christ's tomb ...

The supposed discovery by the BBC and *Sunday Times* of the tomb of Jesus, Joseph and Mary has a precedent in the famed Edwardian thriller *When It Was Dark*, which General Montgomery once described as among the most important books he had ever read. The plot of the book revolves around the discovery of the tomb of Christ, cleverly faked by a corrupt academic, with a damning dedication by Joseph of Arimathea saying that he had buried Jesus.

The results of the discovery are uniformly disastrous. Anarchy breaks out. Women are commonly assaulted. Churches are vandalised. The day is only saved by a clean-limbed young curate who persuades the wicked don to confess to the forgery.

The strident nationalism of the book leaves a nasty taste in the mouth, but it is revealing about Edwardian values when it concludes its litany of disasters consequent to the discovery that Christianity is a fraud by noting, in swed tones, that "Consols fell to 63".

Patrick Cockburn

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EDITOR: Charles Wilson

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A wisp of Easter hope rising

Eighty years ago this weekend, as British and Irish troops fought and died on the Western Front, Irish republicans staged a coup in the centre of Dublin. "A terrible beauty is born," wrote the poet – how disfigured and ugly Yeats's creature now appears. This Easter, the Irish Republican Army, splintered descendants of the men of 1916, put out a petulant message. Look over your shoulders, you Brits, we are going to plant bombs. But we also want to talk, they say, as long as there are no preconditions and the Government sits on the Ulster Unionists. It's an odd, broken-backed statement, but in it there is a glimmering. In 1916, the republican insurgents eventually gave up the struggle, for the good reason that their cause had become hopeless and further bloodshed served no purpose. In 1996 republican terrorists continue to affirm their commitment to violence, despite their political wing having won a place within a process of negotiation about the governance of the north of Ireland.

Except that they do and they don't. Since the bombs six weeks ago a *de facto* ceasefire has held. We do not know how far this is deliberate, how far incidents may have been thwarted and aborted. Still, the statement published in the Sinn Féin newspaper is worth parsing. This, it seems, is the voice of the IRA controlling group itself. And it says, unambiguously, the negotiating table is "the only place for all the representatives of the Irish people to go". Meanwhile Sir Patrick Mayhew says the all-party talks on Northern Ireland in June would be "immeasurably improved" by the presence of Sinn Féin. At least they sound as if the direction of travel is similar.

This weekend the security forces must be extra alert – and make careful use of

the sweeping new powers given them a few days ago. The threat of IRA violence poisons the holiday air. And yet this IRA statement may indicate their appreciation of how much would be lost by further attacks.

The gap between Adams' position and the Government's is barn-door wide. Sinn Féin wants cast-iron guarantees that talks will be about what they call the "real issues" – presumably a non-Unionist-dominated scheme of government for Northern Ireland. But if the British government committed itself, to the extent of saying that decommissioning weapons was one, but only one, of the issues to be addressed, would that get the ceasefire reinstated? Without a reinstatement, Sinn Féin participation is impermissible.

Consultation ends on the Government's proposals for the electoral framework for the new Northern Ireland forum just after Easter. Then the Government moves to legislate. Between now and then is a time for more speeches like Sir Patrick's in Dublin the other day. As long as the *de facto* ceasefire holds, the prospect of a formal re-declaration remains tantalising.

Does that leave ground for hope this Easter? Hope, that the Government in its enthusiasm for peace is prepared to put its House of Commons arithmetic second in order to give Sir Patrick Mayhew his head; hope, that the IRA studies the trajectory of nationalism in the island of Ireland, let alone elsewhere in the advanced world, and acknowledges its own redundancy; hope that would-be republican "martyrs" of 1996 spend a fraction of these next three days measuring themselves not against the mythologised rebels of 1916 but against the example of the Martyr of the first Easter.

Road protesters lose their direction

The trees are felled, the tunnels filled in. So much for the "Third Battle of Newbury". We were all primed for a huge environmental protest, bigger than Twyford Down, better than the M11. Admittedly the campaigners have managed to delay the road-builders' schedule and send the security bill soaring. But the momentum of former campaigns seems to have ebbed, and the predicted hoards of protesters from across the country never materialised. What went wrong? Is the anti-road movement running out of steam already?

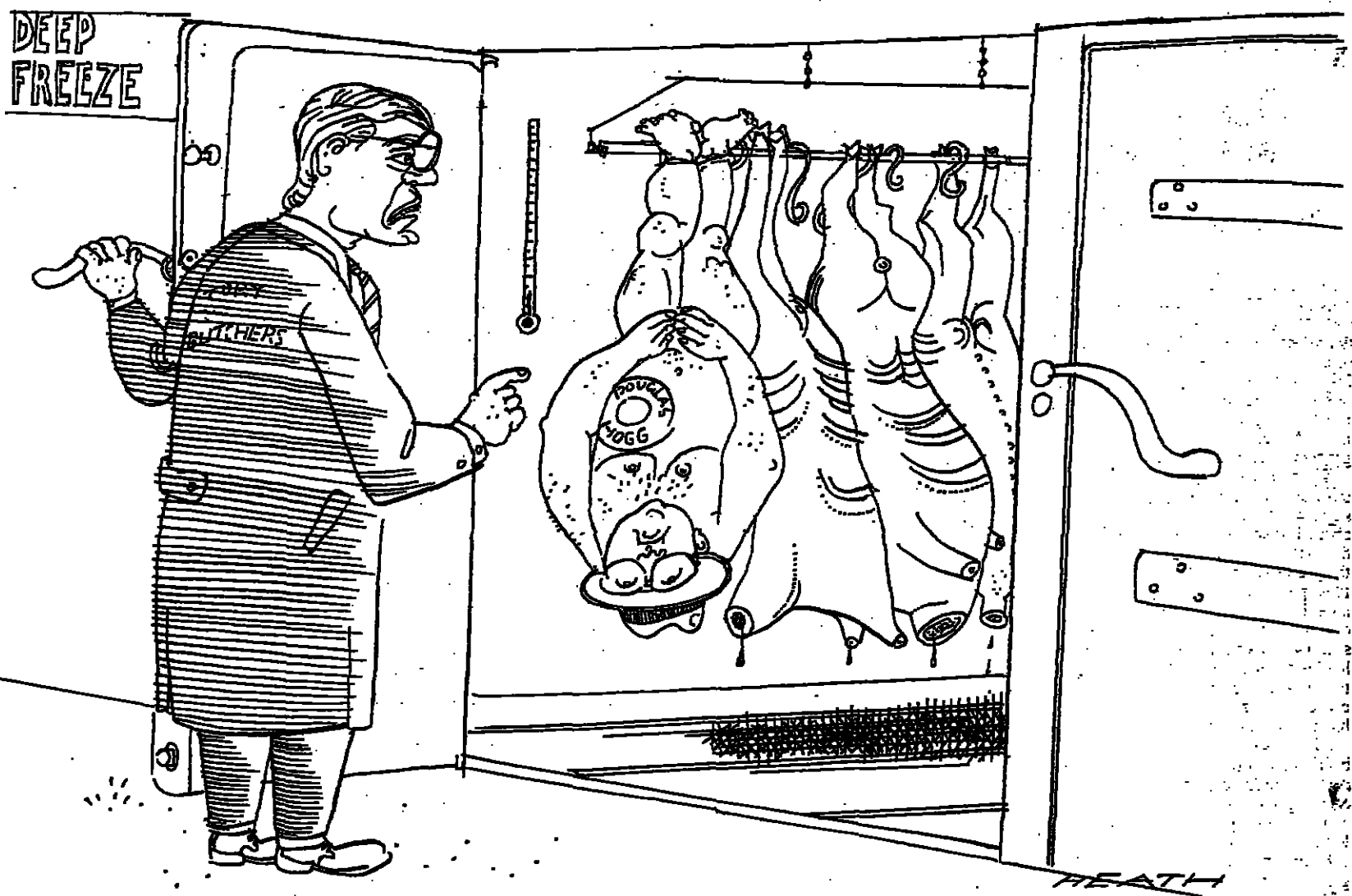
We have probably all been guilty of hype. Ever keen to identify great national moods and movements, the media were only too happy to swallow campaigners' predictions about spectacular clashes to come, as the anti-road campaign swelled, in numbers and in passion. What happened was bound to be an anti-climax.

But even in a more sober light, Newbury has not become the national cause célèbre that might have been expected. The plan for the new bypass contains all the classic ingredients for an almighty environmental showdown. The £101m building programme will slash through an area of immense natural beauty. Newbury is also in the prime location for protest politics. Not far from London, Oxford and Brighton, it is easily accessible to the students and southern middle classes who have populated previous demonstrations against roads or animal exports. Yet many of the protesters who struggled out on former occasions never got their boots on for Newbury.

Perhaps this was to be expected. The first stage of the road-building process did not lend itself well to massive popular demonstrations. With a large area of land to be cleared of trees, it was always hard for protesters to find the action. The tree fellers, on the other hand, could make incremental progress in one corner after another. Against piecemeal destruction, the only effective obstacles were people who climbed trees, or who had the dedication to plan detailed defence strategies. Compared to such sophistication, the "amateur" activists, the day-trippers from Didcot, were bound to feel a little redundant. Disconcerted by both the expertise and the eccentricities of the full-time protesters, the others may have given up.

Support may grow again when the tarmac appears. Bulldozers under the summer sun are a more sexy protest proposition than hacksaws in the winter mud. But there is a serious possibility that the anti-road movement is fragmenting. Committed activists – and there remain hundreds of them in Newbury – have become increasingly specialised. At the same time, incidental campaigners have had the edge rubbed off their enthusiasm. The new roads programme has been reduced. Even the anger against the Newbury bypass has been diffused by the widespread claim that the people of Newbury want it, to take the heavy lorries off their streets.

The anti-road lobby was at its most powerful when it commanded support and commitment across society. Right now it is in danger of becoming a marginalised minority pursuit.



"I'll let you out when all this fuss dies down"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Push back the boundaries of debate on voting reform

Sir: As a Liberal Democrat who joined the Liberal Party back in the 1950s precisely because it favoured proportional representation I welcome any discussion of the subject.

Andrew Marr ("Changing the chemistry of politics", 2 April) is wrong in one important assessment of STV when he says it would require redrawing every constituency boundary. All one needs to do is lump together existing single-member constituencies into multi-member ones, five or six members per enlarged seat being the favoured number, but perhaps not desirable for very rural areas where size might present problems.

Boundaries between present constituencies are often so arbitrary as to be daft, lines drawn on a map to try to create groups of land with roughly equivalent numbers of inhabitants without reference to natural boundaries such as rivers, limits of built-up areas, postcodes or directions in which most people commute to work.

MARTIN KYRLE
Eastleigh, Hampshire

Sir: Andrew Marr, in his piece on electoral systems, omits mention of the variation on the list system called the Additional Member System (AMS), reported to have been favoured by Lord Plant's Labour electoral reform commission.

Under AMS the majority of members are elected as now, first-past-the-post in single-member constituencies. The Additional Members are found by aggregating each party's vote in a small number of regions formed by lumping constituencies together, and selecting additional members from the runners-up in the constituencies to produce a Parliamentary membership roughly reflecting the total party vote in the region.

Some advantages:
1. Complicated to describe, simple to operate: the voter, as now, puts one cross, and when all the votes in the region are in, the computer produces the names of the AMs within minutes.
2. The important member-

constituency link is maintained for the majority of members, but in addition there is a regional representation, which should please the Liberal Democrats.

3. Representation is not quite so precisely proportional as under STV, but will get close to it – much more than under the Alternative Vote.

4. Every member will have commanded a substantial number of votes and none will have come off a central list selected by party hacks.

5. In cast-iron Conservative or Labour seats, electors can safely choose to vote for someone who seems to be a particularly good candidate, but is not of their party, but may get elected.

P A REYNOLDS
(former Vice-Chancellor,
Lancaster University)
Brighton,
East Sussex

Sir: It is good news that the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats look like they are co-

operating over proportional voting. What is bad news is any suggestion of a tilt towards the Alternative Voting System.

Our party (as well as others like the Green Party) will once again find it disproportionately difficult to secure representation despite the fact that we achieved up to 6 per cent in the seats we contested in the European Elections.

We will hold Robert Maclean MP (letter, 2 April), and the Liberal Democrats to their pledge to achieve a properly proportional system.

Surely the way forward is for all the political parties in this country to agree to an independent review of the voting system. Just as MPs should agree to an independent review of what they are paid, we Liberals believe they should surely agree to an independent review of the way they get their jobs.

PAUL MACDONALD
Campaign Director
The Liberal Party
London SW1

The science of winning funds

Sir: The image of the Health Secretary being in thrall to "scientific masters" (leading article, 30 March) is ridiculous. Scientists do not decide what is done, they merely provide answers to questions.

To take an example from my own field, fisheries, what scientists do is answer questions asked by the paymasters, such as how many fish can be safely taken without the risk of the stocks collapsing. The politicians who make the management decisions consistently ignore such answers – as is entirely appropriate since they are trying to balance biological and socio-economic factors (which is not to say they get the balance right!).

The scientists who warned of the link between CJD and BSE were not ostracised by the "scientific establishment". The fact is that the management structure in government laboratories prevents any work being done unless it is approved by the Government.

For better or worse, the knack of being a good scientist these days is not "to ask questions for which it is possible to get an answer" but to ask questions for which it is possible to get funding.

GRAHAM PIERCE
Lecturer in Fishery Science
University of Aberdeen

Sir: If only the public, politicians and it would seem, newspaper editors (leading article, 30 March) understood science better, they would better understand the hard truth. It will probably be many years before any real understanding of BSE and its possible links with CJD are, or can be, fully understood. As to the question whether beef is safe, the only truly honest answer is: we just do not know. However, it will be much-maligned science that will give us answers in the end, not its detractors.

GILLIAN SATHANANDAN
Shrewsbury

Russian superpower stirs anew

Sir: Your editorial "Back in the USSR" (3 April) details the growing trend towards reintegration within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

This trend is not a new phenomenon, as your editorial suggests, but part of an evolution in Russian policy towards the CIS elaborated in a new "Monroe Doctrine" since early 1993 which the West saw fit to ignore or blame on the need for President Boris Yeltsin to appease nationalist voters during election campaigns.

Increasingly it seems that Russia's current leaders perceive the strategic tasks of "Union" restoring as more important than domestic reform and integration into the world community of nations. The capital of the CIS is being moved to a newly constructed building in Moscow in 1998 and all leading posts within the CIS are dominated by Russians.

In the approach to the June Russian presidential elections both leading candidates – Yeltsin and Communist leader Zyuganov – are competing as to who will build a new "Union" or former Soviet Union quickest.

The 15 March Russian State Duma resolutions on reviving the USSR, passed by an overwhelming majority (with only 30 deputies voting against), reflect this trend in Russian domestic politics. Both Russian presidential candidates see Ukraine as the "jewel in the crown" which would satisfy their ambitions of creating a new "Union".

Despite these dangerous trends the West is still making the same fatal mistake by backing the current Yeltsin leadership as it did in 1991 when it backed then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Yet the interests of neither the West nor Russia are served by the revival of a new Eurasian empire and military superpower which would be likely to lead to a new Cold War, a new arms race, Russia's repudiation of international treaties (CFE and Start 2) domestic and inter-state conflict within the CIS and the end of reform and democratisation in Russia.

TARAS KUZIO
Research Fellow
Centre for Russian and
East European Studies
University of Birmingham

Soft and furry kettle water

Sir: You make reference to "the fur in Lancashire kettles" (leading article, "Gummer needs a watertight plan", 1 April). As one who has supped North West Water and the best that Bedfordshire has to offer I'm under the impression that fur is what you get in southern kettles but not in those of the Lancashire I grew up in.

Living as I now do, on the northern edge of Derbyshire (North West Water again), exceptional weather brings peat with the water supply which is clearly visible in the bath, accepted as roughage in the tea pot, but being soft does not fur up my kettle.

M ANI HARRIS
New Mills,
Cheshire

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Hunt for tasty turkey eggs

Sir: Judy Allen asks (letter, 3 April) if she is missing out in never eating turkey eggs. Turkey eggs tend to be rather large and flavoury; I am warmly in favour of them. Yes, she is missing out. Infrequently available but worth waiting for; hunt them down.

PHILIP O'DONOGHUE
New Barnet, Hertfordshire

Sir: In answer to Judy Allen's inquiry about why we do not eat turkey eggs, one can only wonder if they are being fed to the other species of birds in the interests of the mass production of meat and eggs. Perhaps that is why we have salmonella in eggs and poultry. The vegans must have a point.

JOHN FLACKETT
London E6

Sir: Birds have to be more than a year old to have an egg. All turkeys get eaten at Christmas, so they never get old enough to have eggs.

HAROLD STONE
Wareham, Dorset

Saving up for an IVF baby

Sir: Your sympathetic article concerning an accountant who stole £20,000 from her employers to finance IVF treatment ("The baby lottery", 4 April), irritated me.

Thirteen years ago my husband and I were told that our only hope of a family was IVF, paid for privately. We had about £200 in savings and a modest joint income which rarely stretched until the end of the month. However, it struck us that if we had already had a baby, then the three of us would be living on my husband's salary and so we saved everything I earned. It also struck us that if we had a baby, we would be able to spend far less time together as a couple so I took on low-paid evening work and saved what I earned from that. Incredibly, within a year we had saved £9,000, which was enough for six courses of treatment. As a result we have three wonderful children.

A few months ago an elderly friend spent her life savings on having her hip replaced privately because she was in too much pain to endure the NHS waiting list. In a perfect world there would be no waiting lists and IVF would be available free for everyone.

While we wait for the perfect world to arrive might I suggest that childless couples, regardless of their level of income, are in a far better position to save for private treatment than anyone else.

SALLY JACKSON
Cardiff, South Glamorgan

Resurrection survives cynics

Sir: I have followed with interest the story of the possible discovery of an ossuary which may have contained the bones of Jesus and other members of his family (report, 1 April).

What is blindingly obvious to me is that if the body of Jesus had lain in a tomb long enough for it to decompose and leave the bones to be collected in this manner then the embarrassed authorities would have had little problem with the disturbing claims of the disciples. All that would have been required would have been the display of the corpse to prove beyond any doubt that Jesus was still well and truly dead.

Sadly there are always cynics looking for sensational stories to disprove the resurrection. They will have to do much better than this. Still the best explanation for the preaching of the resurrection is that the tomb was empty because "he is risen; just as he said!" (Matthew 28:6).

The Rev ANDREW McMULLON
Crumlin, Co Antrim

Night train to Milan

Sir: Mr Michael Patterson (letter, 3 April) points out the speed with which one can now get from Milan to London by train. However, a day-long journey with two changes does not equal the convenience of the night services we once enjoyed. Many of us regret the loss of the sleeper train from Calais to Milan, via Basel, with carriages on to Venice or Florence, which seems to have quite disappeared. Can we not have this back again – but now from Waterloo?

JOHN MILLS
London NW8

Let's beef up the news about mad cows

Earlier this year I was rung up by Paul Barker, distinguished editor of *New Society*, who told me that a new version of *Gulliver's Travels* was being shown on Channel 4 over Easter.

"That's good," I said. And furthermore, he had been asked to edit a booklet to go along with it, illustrating the way our modern world corresponded to Swift's vision of things.

"Nice one," I said. So he wanted me to write a short piece on one aspect of *Gulliver's Travels*. Namely, on Gulliver's discovery, at one of his ports of call, that when a nation has learnt a great deal about the world it lives in, it does not necessarily make them happier about the world.

"I don't quite see..." Well, explained Barker patiently, we pride ourselves on being knowledgeable in this century, but has it made us more or less frightened of the future? Are we more or less susceptible to scares and panics?

"Ah. You mean..." "Yes. That sort of thing." He did not, as a matter of fact, mean the BSE scare. That had not yet happened. He just meant whatever the last scare was. But he was right. We do tend to use our knowl-



MILES KINGTON

edge to scare ourselves. When I got down to write the piece, I listed all the scares I could think of off-hand. It was an effortless list to write. Salt, butter, rain forests, ozone layer, nuclear accidents, Aids, herpes, Rupert Murdoch, being run over by a police car...

I did, as a matter of fact, write down "Mad Cow disease" on the list, but only as a scare that was now due to pass into history. And I may well have been right. I cannot get out of my mind the voice of one farmer on a Radio 4 phone-in saying that if we were going to have a BSE panic, we should have had it in 1990 when things were at their worst. Things had been improving ever since. He really couldn't see the point of having a BSE panic now.

Actually, the example I raised, in the Channel 4 piece, of the latest scare to hit the public, was that of

electricity pylons. Do you remember this early 1996 scare? It was said that people who lived under or near pylons were more liable to contract certain diseases. It was taken quite seriously at the time, though it has faded from the headlines since then. I don't suppose anyone has done any studies of endangered cows and their proximity to pylons in fields, have they? That would make a nice little scare...

(Incidentally, when the rumour about the pylons came out, my wife said, "That's curious." I asked her why. Well, she said, she had worked on a medical video a year or two before, and when she asked the doctors concerned for an example of a madcap idea held by the public, they both pointed to the widespread rural belief that living near pylons affected you and laughed at the very notion...)

What is odd about all this is not that we are afraid of things revealed to us by scientists and statisticians. The odd thing is that we are NOT afraid of the proven dangers. We know that bad diet gives us cancer. We know that smoking kills us. We know that cars kill us. We know that Chernobyl (as well as certain popular drugs) may have terrible long-term effects. We know all this for sure. Yet

we don't have cigarette or car or fried food panics.

In the aftermath of the Dunblane tragedy nobody pointed out that about as many children die every day or two on the roads as are killed in Dunblane once in history; that cars are a far worse killer than guns. We know all this, so we don't panic. It's the only unknown that gives us the real jitters. Aids was far more scary when it was a mystery killer than it is now...

And at the moment BSE is a mystery killer, and we are all scared of it, and we are running around demanding sacrifices, like medieval crowds asking for witches to be burnt. You hear experts every day on the media, saying that the important thing is not to cure BSE or CJD, but to restore public confidence, which can only be done by killing cows, a trick which didn't work for Aaron when Moses was up the mountain getting the Ten Commandments, and won't work now.

If what I say is true, and we only fear the unknown, then the only answer is to prove beyond doubt that BSE can't infect humans. Then we can all confidently get back to eating beef, as we have got back to smoking, drinking, driving cars and using guns.

April 2015

Revenge of the mutant organisms

Our trust in biotechnology and faith in the quick fix expose our ignorance – and leave us vulnerable

Unnoticed beneath the mounds of mad cows last week was a strange coincidence. While ministers struggled with the nuances of scientific truth and the voter appeal of beef burning, a small document crept quietly out of the Prime Minister's office. This document was also about science and rogue fragments of organic chemistry. But it was not about cows. It was about GMOs – genetically modified organisms.

To understand the full resonance of this coincidence it is necessary to understand what the mad cow story is really about. It is about a group of people who, like the Bourbons, remember everything and learn nothing. Who exactly these people are I don't know, but they are evidently technologists and scientists of some kind. What they did was feed hens to cows just as they previously fed hens to hens. As a result they probably transferred the malevolent prion that causes BSE and CJD across the species barrier first to cows and then to us.

This was a stupid thing to do because, as anybody with any biological knowledge could have told them, creating such a dietary closed circuit would instantly magnify any risk factors. It was doubly stupid because it echoed a mistake made by an earlier generation of technologists who blithely killed insects with DDT while assuring the world that the amounts involved were too small to affect other creatures. In fact, they simply did not understand the system with which they were tinkering – the DDT also killed birds because of the concentrating effects of the food chain. With both BSE and DDT eager technolo-

gists took an excessively simple-minded view of the workings of nature and we all paid the price.

Now back to GMOs. Ever since the early 1970s we have been able to manipulate DNA and thereby change the genetic structure of living creatures. When this first became a possibility the scientists panicked and imposed a moratorium on all recombinant DNA experiments. Biological anxiety swept through the culture: rogue organisms – "superbugs" – might escape from the lab, devastating crops or people. Michael Crichton, inevitably, wrote a paranoid movie – *The Andromeda Strain* – about the possibility. Once released these organisms could never be recaptured, spreading through the biosphere – raging, destructive mutants.

But nothing happened and the biological anxiety subsided. The original analysis of the biologists appeared to be correct – statistically, artificial modifications would be highly unlikely to result in any organism that could compete in the wild. Natural selection over billions of years has produced a robust, competitive ecology. The chances of a released GMO being competitively superior to nature's products was vanishingly remote. There was a risk but it was too small to quantify.

Since then biological knowledge has increased geometrically. Agriculture is being transformed by genetic engineering. Plants and animals – remember the cloned sheep – have had their genotypes adjusted to suit human demands. Viruses and bacteria are manipulated to improve crops or target disease. And, as the biolo-



BRYAN APPELYARD

A little biological knowledge can be a very dangerous thing

gists, backed by vast sums of money, close in on the total human genome, we have become the next in line.

The Anglo-American view of this has been straightforwardly optimistic – the dangers were exaggerated, the possible benefits are vast. In Europe, however, there has been caution. In Germany genetics is viewed with intense suspicion. There Naziism provided a brutal demonstration of how genetic theory could become eugenic practice. When Hitler was in prison his primary reading matter was a text book of genetics. It was a book that was wrong in almost every respect, but it provided convenient justification for mass murder.

As a result, EU genetic law has been substantially more cautious than American. Now British environmentalists, catching up with their European colleagues, have begun to take an interest. The Government Panel on

Sustainable Development, chaired by Sir Crispin Tickell and established by John Major, reported in January and called for a conference to establish international standards to control the release of GMOs. Last week's document was the Government's response.

The response is remarkable because, although it dispenses the usual flannel about things being pretty much OK as they are, it also accepts the panel's call to set up a conference within the next 12 months on possible biotechnological hazards. This would aim for international agreement on the control of GMOs.

This is a startling commitment which indicates a certain admirable seriousness within the Government about biotechnology. The response was certainly written well before BSE took off as an issue. So clearly, somewhere in Whitehall, somebody was thinking seriously about biology before the cows drove us mad.

Seriousness in this area is welcome because BSE has highlighted something we should have known – that a little biological knowledge is a very dangerous thing. And, when set against the fabulous complexity of the living world, the sum total of all human biological knowledge remains very small indeed.

We have acquired ingenious methods for manipulating the code of life, but, beyond that, our ignorance is vast. In Darwin biology may have had its Galileo, but it has yet to have its Newton or Einstein. This places us in a dangerous phase of scientific history. The eerie, mechanical simplicity of the DNA molecule resonates in our imag-

inations, tempting us to think that the whole of life is also simple. Meanwhile, money and hubris conspire to convince us we can do more than we can. And the naive contemporary belief in the quick fix, the magic bullet, the wonder drug leads us to place uncritical faith in the claims of the biologists. Even they have grown nervous at this state of affairs. Harold Varmus, the head of the National Institutes of Health in Washington, recently told geneticists to stop making inflated claims for gene therapy – it was giving science a bad name and raising false hopes in the desperately ill.

The reality is that living systems have revealed themselves as far more complex, subtle and interdependent than we could ever have imagined. And it is the interdependence that we know least about. In the last paragraph of *On the Origin of the Species* Darwin wrote in wonder of an "entangled bank" in which plants, birds, insects, worms lived in incalculably complex interaction. Now we could add billions of viruses and bacteria to Darwin's list, we could talk of DNA of which Darwin knew nothing – but we could not claim to be any nearer penetrating all the mysteries of even that humble ecology.

Yet in ignorance we apply DDT, prescribe thalidomide or turn farm animals into cannibals. Similarly – though, so far, not catastrophically – we release GMOs to engineer the living world. But in the light of what we now know the soothing statistical faith of the scientists in the 1970s looks profoundly unconvincing. Our ignorance of living systems has been exposed once too often. Biological anxiety is back, this time for good.

At long last, the safe tea cosy

The home is littered with potential perils but now there is good news for tea drinkers, says William Hartston

Just as you thought it was safe to go into the kitchen, the Consumer Safety Unit at the Department of Trade and Industry has published its report on accidents in the home.

The tables provide compelling evidence that mad cows are far from being the only hazard for today's chefs and gourmets. Every accidental death in 1994 is solemnly reported and classified along with every accident that led to a visit to any of 18 selected hospitals.

The room in which the accident occurred, the parts of the body injured and the household objects involved are all meticulously recorded, with the victim allowed to incriminate a number of different objects in a single accident.

So the four people injured by Christmas tree light sets could be exactly the same as the four injured by their Walkmans or personal stereos, and might even be included in the figure of six listed under "bids". One can easily see the folly of listening to music while trying to install Christmas lights round your bidet. One gyrates too many to the beat of the music, your hand slips, a sudden jet of water and instant electrocution.

Here are some more dangerous objects with their injury tally:

Pillow case, 2; mangle on washing machine, 3; coal scuttle, 6; hammock, 17; watering can, 21; bean bag, 48; party balloon, 56; clothes basket, 116. In the garden, the watering can is exactly as dangerous as the trowel, though only half as dangerous as a rake. All these, however, are models of safety compared with the wheelbarrow (85), flowerpot (125) and garden fork (143).

For people aged between 15 and 64, however, the kitchen is the most dangerous room in the house, followed by the stairs, the living or dining room, and the bedroom, in that order. Food and drink alone led to 359 deaths in 1992, with kitchen utensils killing another 23. Compared with these rates of carnage, stationery and writing equipment, resulting in only four deaths, was not to be feared. Luggage killed no one at all.

The non-fatal accident rates break down the risks of everyday kitchen life into finer detail: kitchen scales, 2; weights for scales, 3; wok, 4; strainer, 5; drinking straw, 11; coffee pot, 17; toaster, 18; teapot, 66; refrigerator, 185.

The safest items were soda

siphons, chopsticks, mincers and pressurised beer taps, none of which injured anybody. These figures must cast a shadow over last week's reports that tea-drinkers are less likely to suffer strokes than coffee drinkers. The risk of a stroke must now be balanced out against the risks of injury from your teapot and strainer. We ought also to be told how many of the eight accidents involving "unspecified kitchen equipment" were caused by teabags which, incomprehensibly, have no category of their own.

The problem with interpreting these figures is that they give us no true basis for comparison. Is tea-drinking more

For people aged 15 to 64 the kitchen is the most dangerous room in the house

dangerous than coffee-drinking because 60 people were hurt by teapots and only 17 by coffee pots? Or are the statistics simply a reflection of the greater numbers of teapots around our homes? To make valid judgements, we need tables of figures of accidents per teapot and per coffee pot.

Such examples are frivolous, of course, but how should we view the news that 12,762 people were treated for accidents incurred while playing a ball game with no stick, while only 2,159 were hurt in ball games with sticks and only 166 at gymnastics? Should we immediately encourage our children away from the football field on to the cricket pitch and vaulting horse?

To draw any valid conclusions, we need to know how many people are involved in each of the activities concerned.

There is, however, some final good news for tea drinkers. The number of injuries associated with tea cosies has dropped from three in 1993 to zero in 1994. Since one of the main points in publishing these figures is as a guide to potential areas of improvement in product safety, the elimination of tea cosy accidents could be seen as a vindication of the procedure. Having been alerted to the danger of the tea cosy in 1993, British designers once again demonstrated their strengths and rose to the challenge. They were inspired to create the world's first perfectly safe cosy.

The empire strikes back

Both Boris Yeltsin and his Communist rivals have expansion on their minds, writes Geoffrey Hosking

When the Soviet Union fell apart nearly five years ago its disintegration was much more complete than Boris Yeltsin anticipated. As a result, some 25 million Russians found themselves inhabitants of foreign countries, some of them without citizens' rights or suffering violence from vengeful neighbours. Roughly 2 million of them have since decided to leave and seek shelter in their "homeland", the Russian Federation, which already has a desperate housing shortage and growing unemployment, and is therefore not especially keen to take them in.

Even Russians inside the Russian Federation have suffered. Imagine having to go through customs and passport control to visit an elderly mother in Cardiff or Glasgow, and you will understand why many of them resent the dissolution of the USSR.

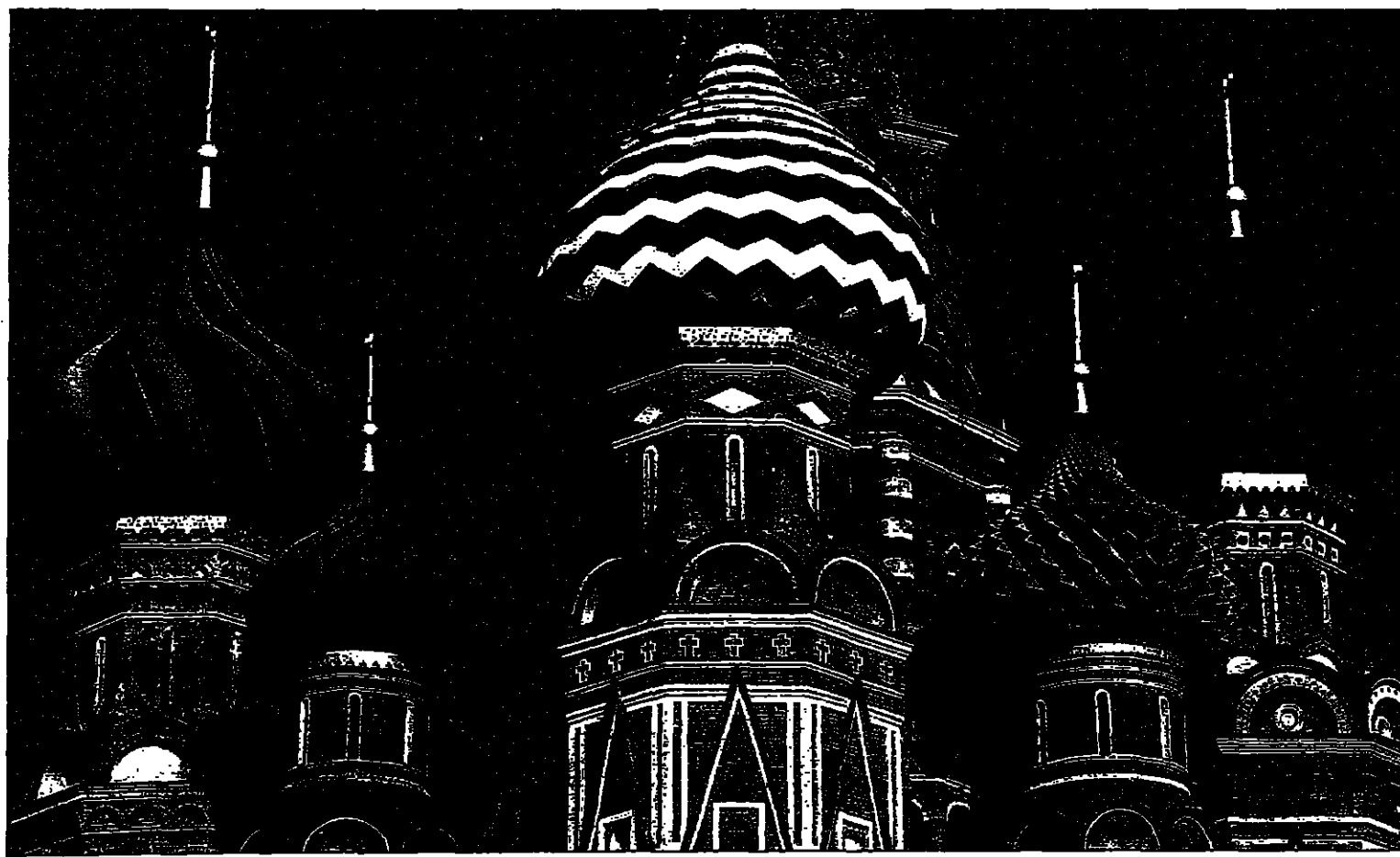
This is the main reason why it has been difficult for Russia to renounce the heritage of empire and become a nation-state among other nation-states. Most Russians still carry around a mental map of the Soviet Union in their heads. "Russian imperialists" are people like you and me, who want to visit their elderly mothers, Yeltsin began his career by trying to make Russia a nation-state, but he has found himself steadily drifting back towards an imperial posture, most markedly in his violent lurch into Chechnia in December 1994.

In the course of the current election campaign, the Communists have repeatedly played on the theme of the collapse of the Union. Their leader, Gennadi Ziuganov, asserts: "For the first time in their history, the Russian people have become a divided people... The Fatherland means a community. But people cannot travel to their relatives or friends for weddings or even funerals."

On 17 March, the Communists persuaded the Russian parliament, the Duma, to pass a resolution condemning the Belovezh accords of December 1991, which formally dissolved the Soviet Union and replaced it with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The resolution amounts to a statement that the USSR still legally exists.

The Duma's move provoked a wave of protest, both from President Yeltsin and from other ex-Soviet republics. Yeltsin called it "scandalous" and "unconstitutional" and claimed it undermined the legal standing of all Russian institutions, including the Duma itself. One deputy, half in jest, suggested the Duma dissolve itself and immediately reconvene the old USSR Supreme Soviet.

If one disregards the rhetoric for a moment, however, then much of the difference between Yeltsin and the Communists vanishes. To begin with, if



Back in the USSR? Whoever wins the June elections, Russia will be aiming to draw the ex-Soviet republics back under Moscow's control

the Communists came to power, what would they actually do to restore the Soviet Union? It cannot be recreated by force, certainly not by the Russian army in its present condition. And what can be achieved by diplomacy and persuasion is already being done by the present regime. Yeltsin has explicitly stated that he hopes the ex-Soviet republics will eventually form a "confederation". So, whether he or Ziuganov wins the presidential election in June, Russia will be aiming to strengthen the ties between most of the ex-Soviet republics.

The forum for their cooperation has so far been the CIS, but it has proved far too loose for Russia. Its agreements resemble a long *la carte* menu, from which members choose their dishes at will. It has no common citizenship and few of its documents are signed by all member states. By comparison, the European Union seems a model of harmony and consensus.

All the same, some of the republics would actively welcome renewed Russian influence and help. They have found the outside world a less welcoming place than they anticipated. They have discovered that their products are less marketable in the non-Soviet world than they had hoped, so they are quietly resuming some of the

old Soviet economic ties, hoping for cheap fuel and raw materials from Russia. Russia is definitely the senior partner in these arrangements, because it commands such huge resources. Symbolically the CIS recently announced that its headquarters would move from Minsk to Moscow.

In the military sense, the CIS is also a very insubstantial alliance. It has no political committee or even a joint command. Most important of all,

Russian imperialists are people like us who want to visit their elderly mothers

Ukraine has never become a member. Russia tends to take the main decisions: it has used its military strength to persuade Georgia and Armenia to accept Russian military bases. Many see the CIS security treaty as a thinly disguised instrument of renewed Russian domination. No doubt that is why Ukraine has never joined it.

Dissatisfied with the looseness of the CIS, some ex-Soviet republics are

moving to form a kind of inner core. Closest of all are Russia and Belarus, which are coordinating their defence and foreign policy, and have signed a treaty which stops only just short of full union. Together with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, they have agreed to dismantle customs barriers and to harmonise their economic, military and social policies. Meanwhile Tajikistan continues to depend on the Russian army to defend its borders.

There are good historical reasons for these republics to feel the need of closer relations with Russia. Belarus has never really felt itself to be a separate nation and Kazakhstan has almost as many Russian citizens as it has Kazakh ones, while Kyrgyzstan is peculiarly dependent on its Russian specialists and professional staffs. Together they seem likely to form a kind of CIS inner core which might actually become a confederation, not unlike the model Gorbachev had in mind when in the last months of 1991 he fought to save the USSR by persuading its members to sign a new union treaty.

The other Central Asian and Caucasian republics feel less close to Russia, and will probably want to preserve a more distinct identity. But they will

need strategic backing and strong economic ties with Russia for the foreseeable future, and Russia has shown in the past that it is prepared to exploit these needs to assert its hegemony.

The great stumbling block is Ukraine, where opinion is sharply divided. The population of the western regions would bitterly resist any rapprochement with Russia. The inhabitants of Crimea and the Donbass, on the other hand, would warmly endorse closer relations, and in the long run may prove difficult to govern from Kiev without them. Several million of them are Russian, and even many of those who are described in their passports as Ukrainian nevertheless identify with Russia or the Soviet Union as a whole.

These are the realities that would face either President Yeltsin or President Ziuganov. Their mutual denunciations are actually electoral rhetoric. In reality both are moving towards a quiet but determined reassertion of Russian imperial influence.

The writer is Professor of Russian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. He gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Domitilla Sagramoso.

How to kill breast cancer

ANOTHER VIEW

Ian Fentiman

become apparent as a result of the UK national programme.

More women are being diagnosed with early breast cancer because they are aware that early diagnosis can be life-saving and that mastectomy can usually be avoided. Treatment has improved, because those at risk of recurrence are now given therapy in the form of hormone treatment or chemotherapy, or a combination. This saves thousands of lives worldwide every year.

But there are still too many women dying unnecessarily. Screening is not

reaching enough women at risk. Almost 50 per cent of breast cancer cases are over 65 when diagnosed and yet women of this age are not called routinely for screening mammography. Extending the age limit to 80 could save 1,500 lives per year in Britain.

Another approach is to identify those at risk. The cloning of the

breast cancer susceptibility genes, BRCA-1 and BRCA-2, will enable us to detect women who have inherited this mutation and who have an 80 per cent lifetime chance of developing the disease. We must then tackle the threat.

Prevention is better than surgery. Changes in lifestyle – exercise, dietary modification, food additives and hormonal modifications – all need to be tested in a rigorous scientific manner. We know from results of using tamoxifen therapy that this reduces the recurrence of cancer and also reduces

by 40 per cent the probability of a cancer developing in the other breast.

One of the clearest messages about treatment of breast cancer is that a team approach involving surgeon, pathologist, oncologist, radiologist and psychiatrist is fundamental. This is the situation that exists in specialised centres and there is mounting evidence that their patients have better survival. Lives should not be endangered by lack of expert management of this potentially curable disease.

The writer is Consultant Surgeon, Imperial Cancer Research Fund Clinical Oncology Unit, Guy's Hospital, London.



The solution he's drinking could save his life. And it only costs 10p.

All over the world, children like Mekonnen are suffering from dehydration. A condition caused by acute diarrhoea which claims the lives of over 8,000 children every day of the year.

But these children are dying needlessly. Because a simple solution of clean water, salt and sugar is often all it takes to help them alive.

As little as 10p will buy a special sachet of rehydration salts to save the life of a child like Mekonnen. £10 from you could help save 100 children. And it could help train workers to administer this and other vital health care.

Please return this coupon with your donation today, or dial 0171-701 0894 with your credit card details. Thank you.

Save the Children Fund, FREEPOST, London SE5 8BR.

Your £10 could help save 100 children

Yes, I want to help Save the Children. Please accept my gift of:

☐ £30 ☐ £15 ☐ £10 ☐ Other £

Name Mr/Ms/Ms

Address

Postcode

I enclose my: Cash ☐ Postal Order ☐ Cheque ☐ CAV ☐

Or charge my: Access ☐ AmEx ☐ Visa ☐ Diners ☐ CAF Card ☐

Account No.

Signature

Card Expiry Date

Return to: Dept. 6050133

Save the Children

Registered Charity No 213890 London SE5 8BR

Suppliers seek suspension of British Gas penalties



MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Seven large gas supply companies have complained to Ofgas, the industry watchdog, over the alleged failure of the system which since 1 March has been balancing gas supply and demand. The companies accuse British Gas, which operates the so-called Network Code, of "chronic data deficiency and failure of information flows".

The companies, which include North Sea producers and large business suppliers such as Alliance Gas, face penalties which could amount to millions of pounds a month - paid to British Gas - for failing to

meet obligations to supply the right amount of gas into the pipeline system to meet their customers' demands.

The letter to Clare Spottiswoode, director general of Ofgas, attacks the "unacceptable and unqualified risks" to which they believe they are being exposed and calls for the suspension of any penalty payments until the problem is sorted out.

A spokesman for Alliance Gas said that British Gas Transco - the part of the company responsible for the Network Code - can underestimate or overestimate the amount of gas needed by 15 per cent.

"There is simply a very large discrepancy between what shippers

know that they must put in to achieve balance and what Transco calculates we must put in," he said.

The complaint comes at an embarrassing time for the Government, which is introducing competition in domestic gas supply in the South-west from 29 April. British Gas's rivals

mainly supply businesses at present but the problem with the Network Code could mushroom once hundreds of thousands of households have the ability to switch away from British Gas.

Ian Powe, director of the Gas Consumers Council, said: "It's the same gas and the same Network Code - and the load-

balancing problems are potentially much bigger."

A spokesman for Transco said that it had heard the shippers' views at a meeting yesterday and would look again at its calculations next week.

Separately, Ofgas is poised to launch a campaign warning customers in the South-west of the dangers of aggressive doorstep selling by rivals to British Gas.

South Western Electricity's gas marketing arm and Calorflex, a joint venture between Tetacal and Calor Gas, have already been heavily criticised by the Gas Consumers Council for bad practice in marketing their services to domestic con-

sumers. Ofgas is keen to avoid any acceleration of the problem as 29 April approaches.

Ofgas licenses new gas suppliers but its powers under the Gas Act do not extend to marketing techniques. However, the watchdog, which has discussed the issue with the Office of Fair Trading and the GCC, is concerned that the problem will hamper the successful start of domestic competition by putting people off alternative suppliers and "leaving a bad taste in the mouth".

An Ofgas source said: "No one wants competition to get off to a sleazy start. It is not in the interests of competition to have people hoodwinked in this way

and we just want things to run smoothly."

An important aim of the Ofgas drive will be to tell people that they are entitled to a seven-day "cooling off" period in which they can opt out of a contract signed as a result of an unsolicited approach. The watchdog will also warn through leaflets and local information services that doorstep sellers are trained to gain consumers' confidence and are unwilling to take no for an answer. The Ofgas source said the message is to be prepared and to remember that "you can change your mind".

The authorities received more than 150 complaints about Sweb.

Tunnel 'ahead' of ferries as duty-free sales rise

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Channel tunnel operator Eurotunnel claimed yesterday to be winning the war with the ferry companies after reporting that passenger figures in March rose 31 per cent.

The debt-laden company said its duty-free price cuts were behind the rise, though ferry operator P&O hit back with its own figures also showing a big rise in passengers.

The rare piece of good news for Eurotunnel helped lift the shares 3p to 66p, after the price had hit several new lows in the past weeks. P&O fell 5p to 51p.

Analysts said that Eurotunnel's commercial success was no longer in doubt and that operating revenues would continue to grow.

However, the cash being generated was insignificant against the £8bn of debts, currently the subject of refinancing talks with Eurotunnel's 225 banks.

Eurotunnel said the increase in passengers on its Le Shuttle was due in part to its duty-free price cuts, which the company estimates has brought in 20 per cent additional traffic.

Sir Alastair Morton, Eurotunnel co-chairman, has been incensed by what he claims is the ferry companies' ability to use on-board duty-free sales as a subsidy.

Eurotunnel's price cuts were an attempt to stop the attraction of ferry companies' booze cruises, a strategy the Channel tunnel operator says is working. The company is forecasting that it will carry up to 150,000 passengers in the four days over the crucial Easter holiday.

P&O rejected Eurotunnel's claims, producing figures for last weekend that showed vehicle numbers up 26 per cent and passengers up 10 per cent on its Dover-Calais route. "These figures speak for themselves," a spokeswoman said. "We are increasing our businesses well."

First-quarter Le Shuttle tourist traffic figures were up 117 per cent compared with the first quarter of 1995, as Eurotunnel increased capacity. An increase of 121 per cent was achieved over the same period for Le Shuttle Freight. Eurotunnel said the record figures for March were proof of the growing strength of Le Shuttle.

Auditors alerted Woolwich board over the weekend

NIC CICUTTI

Donald Kirkham, the retired Woolwich chief executive, was called on to take the helm again two days before David Robinson, his successor, was ousted on Tuesday for alleged financial irregularities, it emerged yesterday.

Mr Kirkham was contacted on Sunday morning at his home by Sir Brian Jenkins, the Woolwich chairman, and told there was a possibility Mr Robinson, who was still on holiday in Barbados, might be required to resign.

The former chief executive indicated that he would be prepared to step back into his former role in the event of Mr Robinson's departure.

Two days later, in Mr Robinson's absence, a Woolwich board meeting was given details of the allegations concerning him, together with his replies. Mr Robinson resigned that afternoon and Mr Kirkham immediately stepped in as interim chief executive.

Details of Mr Robinson's departure emerged yesterday as the society moved to quell fears that its planned £3bn de-mutualisation had been derailed by the events of the past week.

Sir Brian said: "We are still on course. This event has no effect on the business at all. The

Woolwich is essentially the same today as it was a week ago.

"Our strategy and objectives are completely unchanged. We propose to move forward in exactly the same way as we have always intended."

Sir Brian, a former Lord mayor of London and top City accountant, said that in the aftermath of Mr Robinson's departure, meetings have been held with all senior staff to inform them of events and determine the way forward.

The mood was extremely positive, he claimed, and the flotation planned for August next year was still on course.

A permanent successor to Mr Robinson would be appointed "shortly", Sir Brian added. "We have been extremely encouraged at the very high quality of candidates, both internal and external, who have put their names forward in the past few days."

Mr Robinson's departure follows allegations that he misused society facilities, including work on the house and garden of his £450,000 home in Brasted, Kent, and sanctioned the unauthorised use of a Land Rover for his family.

Sources claim that other unauthorised expenses may also have been incurred. Mr Robinson was able to sign off his own

expense sheet, a situation described by one source as "not unusual" for senior executives in most corporations.

It is understood that an internal audit revealed that some of the questioned expenses took place prior to Mr Robinson's appointment as chief executive in January.

The internal audit was set in motion after several initially isolated matters seemed to form a pattern.

The auditor took his report to Maurice Crichton, a board member and chairman of the audit committee, before the weekend. Mr Crichton was sufficiently worried to contact Sir Brian at his home, in south-east London, on Saturday morning.

The chairman invited Lord Borrie and John Florde, two other board members, to a meeting at his house on Sunday, to hear the details. It was decided that Mr Robinson must be summoned to explain what had happened. Mr Kirkham was also contacted at his home. He is believed to have told Sir Brian: "Whatever you want me to do, I will of course do."

At Sir Brian's home on Monday, Mr Robinson was confronted with the allegations, in the presence of his lawyer and one from the Woolwich. He firmly denied all the allegations.



Sir Brian Jenkins: Contacted on Saturday morning by the chairman of Woolwich's audit committee

Bristol & West ponders flotation

Bristol & West Building Society, the ninth-largest in the UK, yesterday signalled that it was preparing to abandon mutual status and follow the flood of societies moving towards plc status, writes Nic Cicutti.

One senior executive at Bristol & West said yesterday it was "considering all options". These included mutual status, but there was "no guarantee" that Bristol & West would remain so beyond next week.

Northern Rock's plans are the latest in a long line that has seen virtually every big society, in-

cluding Halifax, Woolwich and Alliance & Leicester, succumb to rivals or seek to float on the stock market.

Bristol & West has about 1.2 million savings accounts and about 200,000 mortgage borrowers. Some experts believe that if it were to float alone, it might be worth some £800m.

Banking analysts were yesterday unclear whether the society's plans involved a listing on its own or whether it was in takeover talks with another, larger institution.

A merger with a similar-

sized society, such as Birmingham Midshires, prior to flotation was not ruled out.

One analyst, who refused to be named, said: "It is one thing for Northern Rock to go it alone. It is well run, with a dominant presence in the North-east. It may have thought that it had no choice but to de-mutualise and the five-year protection against being taken over if it floats would give it breathing space. But B&W is different. In the past, it has been burdened by debt and is still not very focused."

The crash stands out because it killed executives from so many different companies. There have been aviation accidents in recent years that have hit individual companies, such as the deaths of Frank Wells, of Walt Disney in 1994, and of three executives working for Donald Trump in 1989.

As news of the disaster reached the US on Wednesday, there was confusion for a while as to who exactly had been among the passengers. There were at least two cases of executives who were meant to take the flight but did not.

The youngest of those from the business world who perished was Paul Cushman, 35, who was appointed two years ago as the chief executive of the interna-

BA loses award of quality standard

British Airways has suffered an embarrassing and potentially costly blow after the British Standards Institute withdrew the quality accreditation for its Heathrow cargo business, writes Michael Harrison.

The move followed a two-day audit by BSI inspectors which brought to light a series of weaknesses in management and control systems at the airport.

The inspectors are understood to have discovered that goods were being mislabeled or incorrectly documented and that BA, headed by Robert Ayling, was failing to put corrective measures in place following customer complaints.

BA's total cargo business is worth £318m a year and in 1995 it handled 666,000 tonnes of freight, making it by far the biggest haulier of freight by air in the UK.

A spokeswoman for the BSI confirmed that the accredita-



Rob Ayling: Head of BA, which intends to regain the ISO 9002 standard within six months.

"We are taking our business through a significant change programme and we are experiencing similar problems to other major organisations which have undertaken this level of process re-engineering," the spokesman added.

"This, coupled with the high volume of cargo we are handling through an outdated facility has obviously had an impact on our performance."

A BA spokesman told the specialist trade magazine *International Freighting Weekly* that it intended to regain the

ISO standard within six months.

"We are taking our business through a significant change programme and we are experiencing similar problems to other major organisations which have undertaken this level of process re-engineering," the spokesman added.

"This, coupled with the high volume of cargo we are handling through an outdated facility has obviously had an impact on our performance."

£77bn takeover deals point to a record 1996

JOHN SHEPHERD
Business New Editor

Records for takeovers and mergers on both sides of the Atlantic are set to be broken again this year. More than \$109bn (£71bn) of deals were struck in the US and almost £6bn worth of takeovers were completed in the UK in the first quarter of 1996.

The frenetic activity in the US this week, which saw almost \$36m of deals struck, has eclipsed even the strongest cynics on Wall Street.

"We're in a cycle where everyone is convinced that bigger is better," Mort Pierce, an attorney specialising in mergers at the law firm of Dewey Ballantine, said.

The second quarter of the year began with a bang on Monday when three blockbuster deals were announced within a few hours of each other. They were SBC Communications' \$23.8bn acquisition of Pacific Telesis Group, Acta Life and Casualty's \$8.9bn purchase of US Health-

care, and Allegheny Ludlum's \$3.2bn pact to buy Teledyne. While takeover activity in the UK pales into comparison with that in the US, there are strong signs that 1996 will be a record-breaking year.

Philip Healey, editor of *Acquisitions Monthly*, said: "It was evident at the end of the first quarter when the £8.8bn total value of UK deals contrasted with the £15.8bn, which included the £9.1bn Glaxo Wellcome deal, that only one mega-deal would be needed during the remaining nine months to put 1996 in reach of 1995's all-time high."

He added that "that now looks a distinct possibility" with BT and Cable & Wireless heading towards a £35bn merger.

Top adviser on UK deals this year is UBS, which completed five deals worth £4.4bn in the first quarter of 1996. Mr Healey said: "It will be interesting to see whether UBS will hold leading positions in the league tables in the months ahead and, if it does, whether this will be a result of it capitalising on the continuing

problems at SBC Warburg."

On Wall Street, dealers are convinced that many more deals are on the way, especially in the telecommunications sector, where recent federal legislation has broken down previous barriers to corporate combinations.

"The pace is as heavy as it was last year. It might even be heavier, especially in the large deal area," Don Smith, merger expert at Los Angeles-based investment bank Houlihan Lokey Howard & Zukin, said.

There were widespread market rumours this week of more big deals being imminent. Speculation surrounded Bally Entertainment Corp, which was viewed as a possible target of Hilton Hotels Corporation or ITT. The three firms have declined comment. The burst of merger activity this week came even as Wall Street was still assessing record first-quarter data.

Another indication that the pace is unlikely to slow came this week from Lehman Brothers Holdings, which announced a shuffling of its top officers.

13 executives on board US jet in Croatia

DAVID USBORNE
New York

As Washington grieved the loss of Ron Brown, the US Commerce Secretary, in Wednesday's crash of a US airforce jet in Croatia, corporate America was similarly in shock yesterday over the loss on board of 13 senior executives from companies that included AT&T and the US unit of ABB Asea Brown Boveri.

The men, mostly in their fifties and from the highest echelons of their companies, were accompanying Mr Brown on a meticulously planned trade mission to the Balkans aimed at giving American companies a head start on contracts to assist in the rebuilding of the region's ravaged infrastructure.

The tragedy was expected to spur many companies to reconsider their own safety guidelines for allowing executives to fly around the world. Many US corporations already forbid more than a small number of their managers to fly at the same time on a single plane.

The crash stands out because it killed executives from so many different companies. There have been aviation accidents in recent years that have hit individual companies, such as the deaths of Frank Wells, of Walt Disney in 1994, and of three executives working for Donald Trump in 1989.

As news of the disaster reached the US on Wednesday, there was confusion for a while as to who exactly had been among the passengers. There were at least two cases of executives who were meant to take the flight but did not.

The youngest of those from the business world who perished was Paul Cushman, 35, who was appointed two years ago as the chief executive of the interna-

tional division of Riggs Bank, based in Washington DC.

The AT&T executive was named as Walter Murphy, 52, who was vice president of global sales for the company's submarine division. Mr Murphy was one of AT&T's most experienced employees in rebuilding telephone communications systems after the Gulf War.

Robert Donovan, 54, was president and chief executive of the Connecticut-based US subsidiary of ABB of Sweden, which is expected to be involved in building new power-generating plants in Bosnia and Croatia. Mr Donovan was also a veteran of the Vietnam war.

Leonard Pieroni, 57, was president and chief executive of the Parsons Corporation, one of America's largest engineering design companies, based in Pasadena, California. Parsons was heavily involved in Kuwait after the Gulf War.

Also on board was Donald Turner, 56, president of the Bridge Housing Corporation, well-known in America for its work in building low-cost housing. Paying tribute to Mr Turner, Senator Dianne Feinstein said he was a "legend in San Francisco and California for his innovations in the development of affordable housing".

Among others who lost their lives was Robert Whitaker, 48, chairman of the Foster Wheeler Corporation, which makes energy equipment; Claudio Elia, 53, chairman of Water Technologies Corporation; and John Scoville, 64, chairman of the Harza Engineering Company.

There were also several senior members from the Commerce Department, including an assistant secretary, Charles Meissner, and a journalist covering the mission. He was Nathaniel Nash, of the *New York Times*.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield (%)	Index	Close	Day's change
FTSE 100	3755.50	+30.50	+0.8	3781.30	3639.50	3.95	Nikkei	14580.00	+100.00
FTSE 250	4385.30	+25.40	+0.6	4385.30	4015.30	3.39	Dow Jones	8500.00	+50.00
FTSE 350	1891.30	+14.30	+0.8	1891.30	1816.00	3.82			
FT Small Cap	2109.64	+7.52	+0.4	2109.64	1954.06	3.05			
FT All Share	1869.53	+13.64	+0.7	1869.53	1466.23	3.76			
Tokyo	21471.15	+6.43	+0.0	21600.08	19734.70	0.731			
New York	5687.58	-2.16	-0.0	5689.74	3832.08	2.15			
Hong Kong	11139.88	closed		11504.99	10073.39	3.241			
Frankfurt	2495.18	+0.78	+0.0	2525.42	2253.88	1.961			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling					UK medium gilt				
1 Month	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	1 Month	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
3 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	3 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
6 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	6 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
1 Year	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	1 Year	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
US long bond					Bond Yields				
1 Month	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	1 Month	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
3 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	3 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
6 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	6 Months	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41
1 Year	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41	1 Year	5.94	6.34	8.08	8.41

CURRENCIES											
<p>£/\$</p>				<p>£/DM</p>				<p>£/¥</p>			
<p>New York futures index and DM (West End of 1996) lines</p>											
<p>Comd</p>											
	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		Yesterday		
£ (London)	1.5275	+0.15c	1.6035	£ (London)	0.6547	-0.07	0.6228	\$/¥	169.94		
DM (York)	1.5275	+0.15c	1.6110	DM (York)	0.6547	-0.06	0.6207	¥/DM	169.94		
DM (London)	2.2815	+0.15c	2.7184	DM (London)	1.4895	+0.130c	1.3838	£/¥	169.94		
¥ (London)	163.443	+¥0.33	138.703	¥ (London)	107.000	+¥0.1	86.50				
Index	83.6	+0.2	84.7	Index	95.8	+0.1	89.2				
<p>OTHER INDICATORS</p>											
	Yesterday	Day's change	1994		Index	Lastest Tr	High	Low	High		
10 Year Bond	19.99	-0.08	17.84	RPI	150.8+2.70c	146.9	18 Apr				
Gold \$	389.05	-1.85	392.30	GDP	107.0+0.20pc	108.1	29 Apr				

Handwritten signature: John Shepherd



COMMENT

'During the boom of the 1980s, housing was a one-way bet and buyers snapped up properties in the certain knowledge that the value of their investment would rise. In the cautious 1990s the recovery is much more fragmented'

A housing recovery, but not as we know it

The slump in housing starts in the three months to February compared with a year ago will have come as a jolt to ministers and finally begun to see the beginnings of a new dawn in the property market.

But before you draw the blinds, make one last calculation of your negative equity and whisk away a loaded revolver, take heart. The decline in starts can be explained in large measure by the particularly bad weather this winter and there is every expectation that the housebuilding industry will begin to pick up in the next two months.

Who, in any case, would bet on one set of statistics against the instincts of a wily old bird like Sir Laurie Barratt who has decided to double the number of homes he is building between now and the end of the century. The basis for this optimism is reasonably founded. House prices have risen for eight straight months and should manage a 2% increase for 1996, mortgage rates are at their lowest for 30 years and albeit modest tax cuts are helping to top up the feel better factor.

Job insecurity and the savaging house prices have taken for the last six years are undoubtedly drag factors. But although the negative equity trap is wide, it is also shallow, meaning that it would only take a modest recovery in prices to lift the heads of many homeowners above water.

Activity in the housing market is undoubtedly on the increase with the Royal Institute

of Chartered Surveyors reporting a 10% rise in viewings and valuations this year. What this has not yet fed through to is a commensurate jump in actual transactions. Nor is it necessarily likely to. If we are seeing a housing recovery at last, it is one which differs fundamentally from those of the past.

During the boom of the 1980s housing was a one way bet and buyers snapped up properties indiscriminately in the certain knowledge that the value of their investment would rise. In the cautious 1990s, the recovery in the market is more fragmented, so much so that house values and saleability can vary wildly from street to street.

That is because sanity has returned and a home is now seen as somewhere to live not something to make a living out of. There is a great prize at stake here if homeowners can be lifted out of their collective slum by a recovery in the housing market that is sustainable and non-inflationary and achieved, moreover, without any direct support measures. The Chancellor must be preying it arrives in time for him to take the bow.

Tesco looks like extending its lead

On first reading, Tesco's "help you out" campaign to raise the standards of service in its stores to new peaks of perfection shows Britain's leading supermarket group again taking the high ground in the battle

for the high street. The 4,500 jobs it has created will do its image as an employer no harm while the army of baggers and carriers it has recruited to pamper the customer may step up the pressure on competitors.

These are hardly high quality jobs. Hourly rates of £3.85 to £4.16 are some way better than those offered by the "McJobs" which are the much-criticised norm in the fast-food trade. None the less, these are low paid, part time positions. Britain's deregulated labour market has yet to prove it can create much else by way of employment. Still, a job is a job, and plenty of people will be glad to have them.

Meanwhile, the company's attempts to paint its new initiative as a huge advance in customer service loses some credibility when set against the competition. Indeed, in terms of what it is spending and how many are being pressed to the task, Tesco may be merely catching up with its rivals. Given that the other three groups are already offering similar services, customer assistants at Tesco are going to have to work especially hard to differentiate their service from the rest.

It also remains unclear whether the supermarket's new emphasis on service can ever have the same impact on sales that the earlier, highly effective price-cutting campaigns had. British consumers undoubtedly like good value, they may be more wary about the importation to the UK of American-style bonhomie. Still, Tesco is plainly working overtime to maintain the ever widening gap

it has opened up with its main rival, J Sainsbury. Moreover, Tesco remains well ahead of the game on IT and efficiency. These gains are of themselves probably capable of absorbing the annual £100m cost of the company's customer care strategy, of which yesterday's initiative will cost £20m. If the extra sales do materialise, it will all be icing on the cake. If Sainsbury doesn't pull something remarkable out of the hat soon, which in turn will probably require management change of a much more dramatic nature than has been seen to date, then Tesco looks to extend its lead well into the next century.

Rentokil may be able to bluff it out

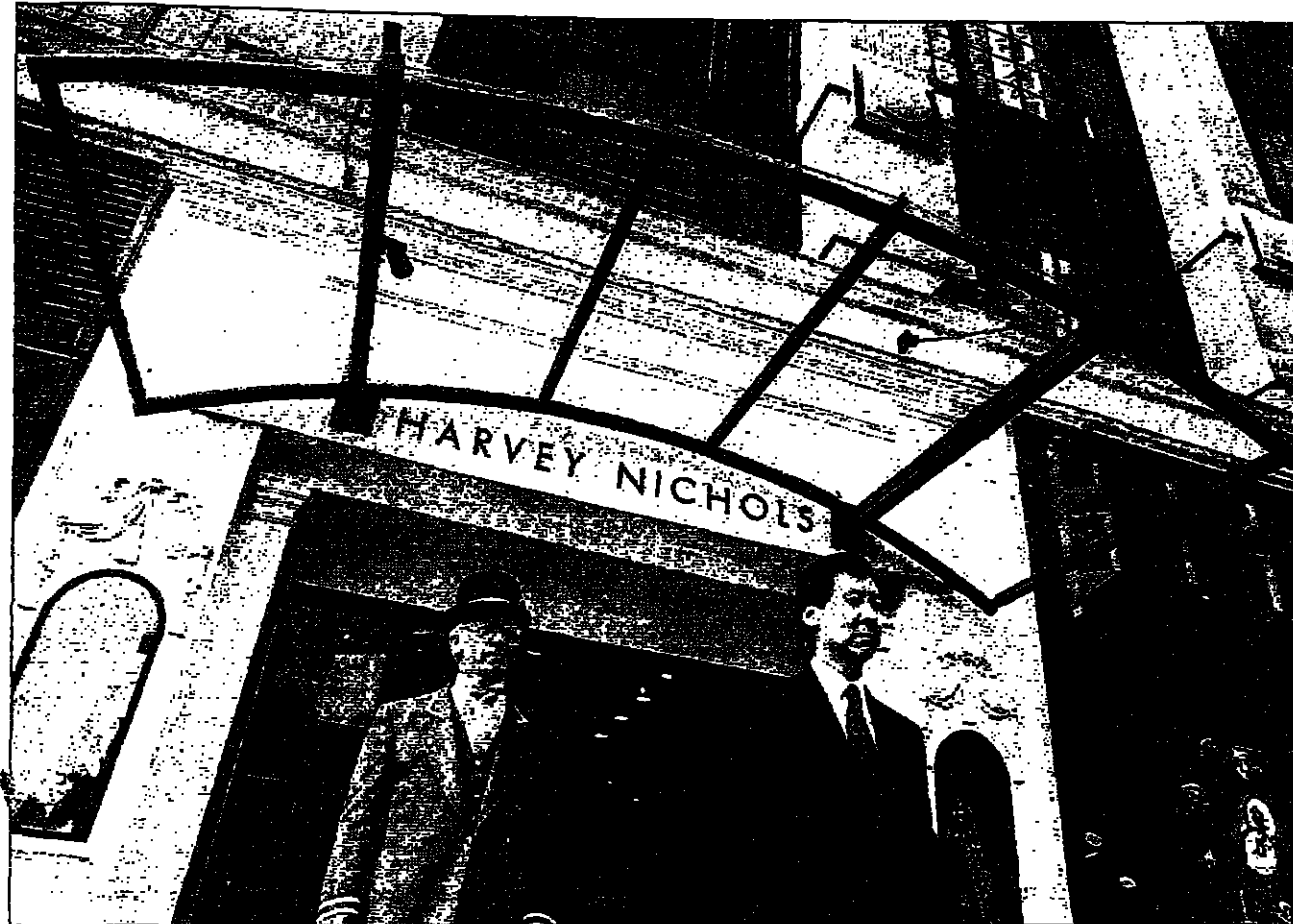
To tweak or not to tweak - that is the question facing Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil this weekend as he bids for BET enters the final furlong. Raising the bid by just a little - say 10p to 15p a share - would almost certainly secure success. But he might just get away with it even if he does nothing. BET's big four shareholders, M & G, Prudential, Threadneedle and Fidelity, are urging BET's John Clark to seek an agreed deal, in the hope of securing better terms. But with the arms now sitting on well over 20 per cent of the stock, Rentokil will be sorely tempted to bluff it out.

On record and strategy alone, Mr Thompson plainly deserves to win hands down. Bor-

ing may well be the word that best describes this takeover tussle, but it is clearly not a condition Mr Thompson suffers from. For fourteen years, way beyond the boredom threshold of most chief executives, Mr Thompson has trudged into Rentokil and every day he seems to find a new challenge in this distinctly unglamorous mix of pest control, tropical plants, office cleaning and motor-bike courier group of businesses. Since he arrived, £3.4bn has been added to Rentokil's stock market value and earnings have soared, year in, year out.

Mr Clark, by contrast, has been at BET just four years, insufficient to establish the sort of high performance culture of success enjoyed by Rentokil but long enough to do more than he has done in establishing a viable strategy for BET's equally dull collection of service businesses. Mr Clark did a great job rescuing BET from the financial abyss into which it was sinking. But as his share price tests, he hasn't done much else. Ignore this bid and the share price wouldn't be very different from the level it was at when Mr Clark arrived in 1992.

Just a little more time, Mr Clark protests, the refrain of all executives caught in slumber by a hostile takeover bid. If time isn't on his side, money certainly seems to be. When Mr Clark flies back to the US, his company lost to Rentokil, it will be with a cool £5m in his back pocket, courtesy of a three year rolling contract and various performance related bonuses.



Upmarket offering: Joseph Wan, chief executive, outside Harvey Nichols yesterday

Photograph: Edward Webb

Poon to triple investment with Harvey Nichols float

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Dickson Poon, the Hong Kong businessman who bought Harvey Nichols for £50m in 1991, will triple the value of his investment when Princess Diana's favourite store comes to the market this month. Back in profit, and about to embark on an ambitious expansion into the provinces, Harvey Nicks is expected to be worth up to £150m.

Issuing its pathfinder prospectus yesterday, the company promised potential investors that it would resist attempts to popularise its upmarket brand name. Joseph Wan, chief executive, said he had turned down requests from BAA, the airport operator, to open stores at Heathrow and Gatwick.

"We are always totally mindful of doing only the best of the best and preserving the brand name. I want to take the brand

even more upmarket," Mr Wan added.

Dickson Concepts, the vehicle through which Mr Poon acquired the shares, plans to place 49.9 per cent at 240p-270p a share. At that level, he will more than recoup his original investment and still retain majority control of the company.

Mr Poon bought Harvey Nichols in the depths of the recession when it was loss-making. He has since turned it round and profits of £9.1m are expected for the year to March just ended. That would represent a 50 per cent increase on the previous year.

Harvey Nichols is coming to the market at a time when the group is planning a number of new investments. These include a new store in Leeds in the autumn and a restaurant at the newly refurbished Oxo building on the south bank of the Thames in London.

Mr Wan said the company also planned to increase the profits of the flagship Knightsbridge store and to develop a string of regional outlets in large cities and more stand-alone restaurants. There are proposals to create a wholesale fashion business that would attempt to set up exclusive distribution deals with top fashion names such as Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren.

He countered fears that the group might be expanding too quickly: "We are an ambitious group and want to grow our business, but we will not run before we can walk." No other provincial stores will be opened until 1999 when the success of the Leeds pilot store will have been established.

Of restaurants, Mr Wan said: "We will select only unique locations with excellent food and quality of service. Why should it not succeed?"

Harvey Nichols' main store is expected to benefit from an improvement in the retail climate in the UK. However, the company believes that even without improving trading conditions profits can be improved by raising sales space and density and by maximising the balance between own bought products and concessions.

The valuation of £132m-£148.5m was in line with analysts' expectations, although some suggested this was a little expensive at a price/earnings ratio of around 24 against a retail sector average of about 18.5.

Mr Wan dismissed that concern, saying Harvey Nichols should be compared with other top stores in the sector rather than the average, and that on this basis the ratio was reasonable. He said the House of Fraser traded on a p/e of 24 while Liberty was value at 26 times earnings and Next at 22.

IN BRIEF

• Daiwa Bank New York branch's former general manager pleaded guilty to helping the bank conceal a \$1.1bn trading loss from US bank regulators after a trader confessed to them in July. Masahiro Tsuda pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the US Federal Reserve Board at a hearing in New York. He said he was following orders from his supervisors and that Japan's Ministry of Finance wanted to delay reporting the losses. Tsuda was charged last November on the same day that a federal grand jury indicted Osaka-based Daiwa Bank on charges of covering up the \$1.1bn loss that its head government bond trader in New York, Toshihide Iguchi, amassed during 12 years.

• Metallgesellschaft is not ruling out an out of court settlement with its former chief executive officer, Heinz Schimmelbusch, according to company spokesman Andreas Martin. He said this would be acceptable to the company provided Mr Schimmelbusch accepted responsibility for oil-trading related losses incurred at the company during his tenure in 1992-1993. The company sued Mr Schimmelbusch for Dm25m (£1.1m) in damages last year, with the suit still pending in Frankfurt.

• More than 100 dealers have been ordered to man currency, bond and equity desks today in the event of US employment statistics causing a repeat of last month's dive on Wall Street. BZW, SBC Warburg and Kleinwort Benson, and HSBC all said they had taken the precaution of calling staff in for the day.

• Total insured losses from catastrophes in the US last year have been estimated at \$2.5bn (£1.6bn), the third worst in history. Winter storms were responsible to the large amount of claims, said the American Insurance Services Group, whose Property Claim Services unit compiles the figures.

• Banque Paribas said its Courcouronnes-Bouvet brokerage unit has acquired the private banking asset management activities of Swiss Bank Corp unit Societe de Banque Suisse for an undisclosed sum.

• Richard Page, Junior Energy Minister, has approved proposals for Amerada Hess to develop the Durward oil field in the Central North Sea. Five production and four water injection wells will be drilled. Recoverable reserves are estimated at 50 million barrels of oil, with a field life of five years. First oil production is scheduled for early 1997.

• Mercury One-2-One, the joint venture mobile phone company equally owned by Cable & Wireless and US West, said it had a total of 410,000 customers at the end of last month, giving it a 7 per cent market share in the UK. It said its network had 40 per cent of the UK's population covered in February, and expected 80 per cent coverage by the end of the year. More than 75 per cent of subscribers make a call every day and more than 25 million calls are made every week.

• Pearson, the media and entertainment group, announced a new profit sharing agreement for the three Lazard investment banks in which it retains a significant stake. The partners and managing directors of each house in New York, Paris and London, will receive about one third of the profits of all three from a common pool, to be shared out globally. "Our purpose in creating this system is to make the most of who we are without jeopardising what makes each of us unique," said Michel David-Weill, chairman of both Lazard Freres & Co and Lazard Partners. The chairman of both Lazard Freres & Co and Lazard Partners. The chairman of both Lazard Freres & Co and Lazard Partners. Up until now, the partners of the three banks have shared profits locally.

• The Inland Revenue yesterday said that employees were liable to tax on any financial inducement paid by their employers on the condition that they do not join a rival company. However, employees can escape tax if they simply agree to waive any legal rights and claims they might have against an employer in return for a pay-off. The ruling will be widely welcomed by employees facing redundancy. It is increasingly common for employees to be asked to sign away any legal rights in order to qualify for redundancy payments.

Incentives fail to get new cars on to the roads

RUSSELL HOTTEN

New UK car sales fell again last month as private buyers continued to shun the market despite massive incentives and promotional schemes run by manufacturers.

Sales fell 0.87 per cent in March to 180,275, from 181,849 in same month last year, with fleet sales recording a 3.9 per cent gain, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Roger King, SMMT director, said: "Once again these figures reveal growth in the fleet and business sector, wholly offset by the decline in private purchasing." Private sales fell 6.6 per cent, a decline which Mr King said was a cause for concern.

Ian Shepherdson, UK economist at HSBC, said that manufacturers were raising car prices above the level of inflation. "The trend in sales does now seem to be downwards in contrast to the recent improvement in the housing market and retail sales," he said.

"The problem with new cars is almost certainly that, as the Retail Motor Industry said last

week, they are too expensive. Prices have risen by 4 per cent over the past year. Sales will therefore continue to struggle this year."

Mr King said that the recent reports that UK and European car prices were higher than those in the US were "misleading" as they were not comparing like with like.

"The reports have done nothing to build consumer confidence, which can only be encouraged by both manufacturers and retailers working together," he said.

New car registrations for the first quarter were up 1.08 per cent at 531,049 compared with 525,364 in January to March 1995. Ford remained the clear market leader, selling 35,534 cars in the month for a 19.7 per cent market share, although this was down from 21.22 per cent a year earlier. General Motors' Vauxhall division was in second place with 28,006 registrations, 15.54 per cent of the total.

Meanwhile, car fleet operators yesterday launched a campaign to secure the abolition of separate delivery charges for cars and vans bought in the UK.

BET rejects attack on pledge to lift dividend

RUSSELL HOTTEN

BET fired another shot in its defence against Rentokil yesterday amid growing speculation that the current £1.9bn bid will have to be raised to secure victory.

As the takeover battle becomes increasingly acrimonious, BET rejected attacks on its promises to raise its dividend by issuing new information about debt levels.

BET said that as at 30 March its estimated net debt had fallen to less than £50m, from £114m at 30 September last year. The company said it paid, net of disposals, £65m cash on acquisitions and £39m in dividends during the whole of the last financial year. BET said it

was reacting to Wednesday's Rentokil statement questioning BET's ability to fund its increased dividend commitments and its acquisition programme.

John Clark, chief executive of BET, said: "Judging from its press release, Rentokil appears to have based its inadequate offer on an assumption that net debt amounted to more than £114m. The estimated level of less than £50m further demonstrates the utter inadequacy of Rentokil's offer."

Rentokil defended its claims. Clive Thompson, chief executive, said: "The simple fact is that, despite BET's claims to be cash-generative, it is not. It has negative cash flow and its cash position is deteriorating."

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We are offering readers of The Independent and the Independent on Sunday a superb 2 for 1 offer on day return trips with Eurostar, for only £125. When you pay for one standard day return ticket at £125, to either Paris, Lille or Brussels, you will get another to the same value, free.

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If you would like to stay a little longer in either Paris or Brussels, then you can make use of our second offer. With our Short Break, you can stay in a small, friendly hotel, right in the heart of Paris or Brussels.

Prices start from £109 per person and include one nights accommodation (sharing a twin or double room); continental breakfast; return Eurostar travel and local taxes.

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with easy access to either the metro or public transport. For Brussels, there are mid-week supplements for three and four star hotels upwards, from £8 per person per night. Listed on this page are details of the hotels.

How to Qualify
Simply collect four differently numbered tokens from the seven we will be

printing until Saturday 6 April. On Wednesday 3 April we printed an application form which you must complete and send with your tokens. Today we are printing Token 6; Token 7 will be printed in tomorrow's Independent.

How to Book

To book your Eurostar 2 for 1 day return trip to either Paris, Lille or Brussels, simply call 0345 660420 (9am - 5pm Mon-Sun). Your travel arrangements will be checked and the booking price confirmed. You will be asked to pay by cheque/credit card to European Passenger Services Limited. If you are paying by cheque you will be given details of where to send your cheque to. Your four tokens and application form should be sent to: Independent/Eurostar, PO Box 4AP, London W1A 4AP.

To book your Short Break to either Paris or Brussels, simply select the hotel at which you would like to stay, then call 01233 646181 (9am - 5.30pm Mon-Fri). Your hotel availability and travel arrangements will be checked and the booking price confirmed. You will be asked to pay by cheque/credit card to Swinards. Your four tokens, application form and cheques should be sent to: Independent/Swinards UK Ltd, 20a Bank Street, Ashford, Kent TN23 1BA.

Bookings for both our offers can be made from 3 April - 10 May 1996. Travel is available from 29 April - 3 June 1996. Terms and Conditions are as previously published and are available upon request.

Hotel Name	Grade	Short Break (cost per person)	Extra Night (cost per person)
PARIS:			
Beccaret	2	£109	£33
Royal Navarin	2	£109	£33
Royal Magenta	2	£109	£33
Chevigny	3	£129	£44
Appel	3	£129	£44
Cusset	3 (superior)	£139	£54
Brebant	3 (superior)	£139	£54
The Garden Elysee	4	£155	£70
Cyprien Comodore	4 (superior)	£179	£99
BRUSSELS:			
The Cascade	2	£109	£36
The Vendome	3	£119	£42
The Bedford	4	£125	£46



business

Radical surgery revives McAlpine

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

McAlpine had warned in January that its decision to pull out of traditional open tender building work would send it plunging into the red. It was no surprise yesterday, therefore, that when it announced the figures the shares should edge 4p higher to 178p.

There was relief that the company, no stranger to banana skins, should have delivered as promised and investors have started to study the potential benefits of the focus on housebuilding, civil engineering and partnership work.

Results for the year to December confirmed the need for something radical to be done to allow McAlpine to create value for shareholders once again rather than eating it up, which as the chart shows, has been its main achievement over the past five years.

The pre-tax loss of £23.5m was struck after a £34.7m exceptional write-off to cover losses from the discontinued building businesses of £7.3m and the £27.4m cost of shutting them down with the loss of 650 jobs. Despite the collapse in the earnings per share line, the dividend was maintained at 7p as a sign of confidence that the corner has finally been turned.

Certainly there is evidence that the housing market is beginning to pick up after a dismal second half to last year stuffed out the green shoots that most builders experienced in the first three months of 1995. An improvement is badly needed as last year's rise in average selling price was not enough to offset rising costs elsewhere and operating profits slipped from £17.9m in the 14 months to December 1994 to just £11.5m, a 2.6 percentage points drop in the margin to 7 per cent.

Civil engineering also had a tough time of it as the Government cut back on its road spending plans and the company took the sensible view that a lot of the work it had previously tendered for was not worth the candle. A collapse in the order book to a profitable ramp of prospective work should mean that results start to improve.

Elsewhere, the formation of a special projects division to chase work such as football stadia and other leisure opportunities where McAlpine has a competitive advantage makes good sense. Profits from America of £3.4m may not sound a big return on sales of £102m, but it is twice as much as last year and the order book is improving.

McAlpine is far from out of the woods yet but, almost alone in the industry, it has taken some courageous decisions in the past few months, despite consistent slipping from its own shareholders. Pre-tax profits of maybe £12.5m this year and £15m next time

put the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 16 falling to 13. Given the balance between recovery potential and the uncertainty still hanging over the industry that is reasonable.

Shake-up costs hurt Norcross

Michael Doherty, chairman of Norcross, has lived a charmed life. Arriving in 1988, the year after the mini-conglomerate escaped a £570m bid from Williams, Mr Doherty's brief was to give some direction to a group which had lost its way after a bout of over-expansion had left it bloated and directionless. But despite almost continuous restructuring in the intervening period, the shares have tumbled from over 400p to just 85p, up 1p yesterday.

After eight years in the job, Mr Doherty is relinquishing his executive duties, although he will remain chairman. The executive reins are being handed on to Joe Matthews, head of the group's ceramics division, to reflect

the new focus on that business. Two new directors are also being appointed from within Norcross to replace recent departures, including Nicholas Kelsall, who moves up from his position as finance director of the H&R Johnson Tiles business to take on the same role at group level.

This less than full-blooded reshuffle at the top was accompanied by news that the slow unwinding of Norcross is becoming increasingly painful. The group revealed that it will be forced to take a £5.3m charge in its results to March to cover restructuring in parts of its print and packaging division, along with the costs of moving the head office closer to its new core, the ceramics operation and Triton showers.

The charge is bad news for hard-pressed shareholders who were told last June that they could expect to receive some direct value from the sale or merger of the division. The restructuring has been made necessary by a disappointing performance in print and packaging last year, particularly the Autotype and Norprint offshoots. Estimates for the division's worth, which varied from £100m-£150m last year, are

coming back to nearer the bottom end of the range. It is not at all clear whether a Norcross pared back to tiles and showers, both of which are operating in highly competitive markets, would attract a bid. But, standing at around their break-up value, the shares are probably still worth holding, with the chance of a special dividend payout once the print and packaging sales are completed.

Hornby's profits still off track

Hornby's profits were derailed in the 12 months to December, a reflection of one of the company's most turbulent periods since it first started delighting children (and their fathers) in 1920. Dutifully bowing to the latest stock market fashion for focused businesses, Hornby has pulled out of power boats—a wise decision given the total lack of synergy with the main business, but it came at a cost.

The disposal of Fletcher Boats to Kevin Leach, the Jersey-based entrepreneur, crystallised a £4.1m loss which blew a hole in otherwise pretty respectable profits. After the one-off charge, last year's £930,000 profit reversed into a £3.8m loss. There was no dividend because a change in year end means the payout will be announced along with 15-month figures to the end of March.

Behind all the red ink, sales of Hornby's core products, which as well as the model trains, include Scalextric slot racing cars and Nikko Radio Control, increased by 16 per cent. Profits from the continuing operations moved ahead smartly from £1.06m to £1.33m.

That was offset by a £379,000 loss from Fletcher and the imported toy business which is also being discontinued. Completing the clear out was a £694,000 charge to cover a write-off on a 10 per cent investment in San Francisco Toy-makers and a £280,000 redundancy charge.

Having cleared the decks operationally and in the boardroom (the company is still in dispute over the resignation of former chief executive Keith Ness), the stage has been set for a recovery in Hornby's fortunes and could arguably open the way for a bid.

In an increasingly consolidated toy market it is not completely apparent that Hornby has the commercial clout to compete with the Mattels and Hasbros of this world. Having doubled in value over the past year, the shares, unchanged at 192p, are high enough.

Ostrich crisis follows hot on the hooves of mad cow

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

You've had the mad cow disease scare, now comes the crisis in the ostrich industry. The Ostrich Farming Corporation of Mansfield is being wound up by the official receiver on orders from the Department of Trade and Industry.

The company has raised millions of pounds from investors by advertising a scheme selling ostriches as an investment opportunity. However, they are not regarded as investments by the regulators, and therefore had to be shut down, although no investors have lost money.

The receivers will be in control pending a winding-up petition on 8 May. Unfortunately it would now seem the corporation will no longer be able to contribute to a "lightening up" of the industry's

code of ethics—which it called for in this very Diary a month ago.

Sick and tired of hearing whiney complaints on the phone at work? Do you ever wish that irritating callers would use more dulcet tones? Now your dream can come true with the "Encore" phone headset by Plantronics of Swindon.

By the mere flick of a switch on the headset the user can select "a fuller, richer tone—or revert to normal telephone tone if the caller is too high-pitched". A monaural set (with sound in one ear) starts at around £86.95 while binaural sets kick off at £106.25. Other versions are planned including four more "noise cancelling" models. The possibilities are

endless. How about a set that screens out calls from the bank manager?

The people at Heineken are worried. Not enough City people have applied for a chance to receive the Heineken Export "Wildcat Dreams" substantial bonus worth £25,000. Entries have to be in by 26 April and the winners announced in June.

Applicants must describe the wild journey they have in mind—paddling up the Zambezi, say, or hiking through Peru. Heineken is worried that one of its core markets for strong lager—young chaps in the City—make up only 3 per cent of applicants so far.

Which means you lot must either be working too hard or something like the Railtrack privatisation, or are still sleeping off a hangover.

Oxford won the Veterans Boat Race against Cambridge yesterday—with a work rate only 7.5 per cent below what the youngsters are expected to expend on Saturday in the real thing. The over-35s race was a huge success, with only half-a-length dividing the boats as they completed half the usual race distance, from University Stone to Hammer-smith Pier.

"It's a very, very fast time," said one expert. "A number of the crew are in early retirement, so they have time to train." Their work rates were calculated earlier using a Concept II Ergometer, a cross between a rowing machine and an instrument of torture (for the unfit, that is).

Most of the veteran Cambridge crew were merchant bankers. Perhaps those lunches slowed them down a bit.

Even Barry Bateman, Fidelity's managing director, will be at work today—it is the last chance for FEP applications in the current tax year. Get your Tessa money in now.



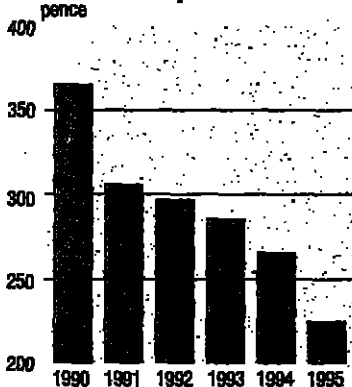
Ever since 1844 the Equity & Law name has been part and parcel of Lincoln's Inn Fields in central London (above). The name of the insurance company, founded by lawyers from the area, even survived the sale of the company in 1988 to a giant French company, AXA, to become AXA Equity & Law. Next year the British bit of the name will at last be scrapped, leaving AXA Life, although the UK head office will remain in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The old E&L was hugely popular with independent financial advisers, part of the reason the French bought it, and now the company feels enough people recognise the AXA name over here. So what does AXA stand for? Nothing in particular, according to the company, it's just a modern sounding, internationally acceptable name.

Alfred McAlpine: at a glance

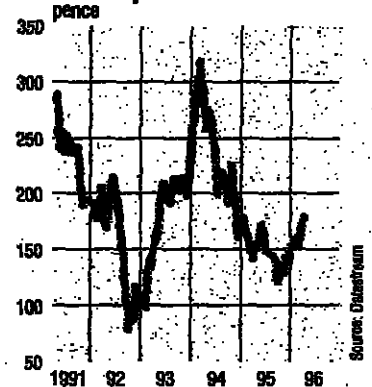
Market value: £123m, share price 178p

5-year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£m)	621	561	621	928	757
Pre-tax profits (£m)	3.5	3.4	1.2	10.7	-23.5
Earnings per share (pence)	2.9	4.7	0.7	10.2	-37.2
Dividends per share (pence)	10.0	6.3	6.3	7.0	7.0

Net assets per share



Share price



Thomson and GEC join in sonar venture

JOHN SHEPHERD

Thomson-CSF of France and GEC-Marconi, the main defence unit of British engineering conglomerate General Electric, are pooling their three existing sonar systems businesses. The move will create the world's largest sonar company called Thomson Marconi Sonar, which would have annual sales of around £360m and 3,500 workers.

On grounds of national security, both the UK and French governments have asked the European Commission not to study the deal. The governments feel it "would not be appropriate for the military aspects of the transaction to be notified to or considered by the EC Commission under the EC merger regulation," a spokesman for the Department for Trade and Industry said.

The action by the two governments makes use of article 223 of the EC Treaty which

allows member states to protect their essential security interests in merger regulation. The European Commission has no immediate comment on the request. "The Commission has not yet received the request. As soon as it gets more detailed information it will examine the issue with all necessary care," a spokesman said.

A spokesman for GEC said: "TMS will build on the respective strengths of its two shareholders to secure European

and world market leadership in sonar."

Thomson Marconi Sonar will provide sonar systems, which use sound waves to track, chart and identify underwater activity and installations, for surface ships, submarines, aircraft and mine warfare.

The company will be owned 50.1 per cent by Thomson and 49.9 per cent by GEC-Marconi, and will have operating centres in France, Britain and Australia. Its international joint venture

team will be based in France. Industry analysts welcomed the merger, calling it a tidy alliance following a confusing period for Anglo-French defence co-operation.

In February, Thomson-CSF chairman Alain Gomez resigned in a row over the best method for developing Thomson-CSF. Newspapers reported at the time that the French government forced him out because of his plans to strike a deal with GEC instead of a French partner.

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COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Don Valley Construction (F)	25.1m (22.4m)	0.35m (0.45m)	2.41p (2.85p)	1.05p (1.05p)
Don Valley (F)	8.01m (7.78m)	0.21m (0.07m)	0.52p (-)	0.2p (0.2p)
Delphic Packaging (F)	33.4m (28.8m)	3.28m (2.24m)	9.17p (7.1p)	5.2p (4.5p)
Delphic (F)	42.0m (38.8m)	-8.3m (8.8m)	-40.7p (8.7p)	5.7p (5.7p)
Home Cinema News (F)	30.5m (26.0m)	1.72m (1.88m)	11.73p (10.74p)	5.5p (5.5p)
Marine & Merc Soc (F)	10.04m (10.12m)	-1.5m (-0.3m)	-25.2p (-15.7p)	nil (-)
Marine Ltd (F)	90.2m (90.4m)	-1.77m (0.71m)	-8.1p (1.4p)	1.7p (1.1p)
Alfred McAlpine (F)	757m (628m)	-23.5m (10.7m)	-37.2p (10.2p)	7p (7p)
Overseasairways Holdings (F)	4.35m (2.47m)	-1.00m (-0.01m)	-3.93p (1.33p)	nil (-)
Bag Group (F)	27.8m (22.0m)	1.14m (1.75m)	7.3p (12.5p)	4.05p (-)
Oliva Group (F)	73.0m (68.0m)	0.18m (0.61m)	0.01p (-1.5p)	nil (-)
Scotline (F)	41.1m (33.0m)	1.3m (1.8m)	18.4p (24p)	13p (13p)
Superscope (F)	1.58m (1.48m)	-0.9m (-0.84m)	-13.1p (-14.1p)	nil (-)
UK Safety (F)	27.5m (20.9m)	-1.40m (1.62m)	-3.7p (6.2p)	nil (-)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim (L) Latest figures 12 months, comparatives 9 months

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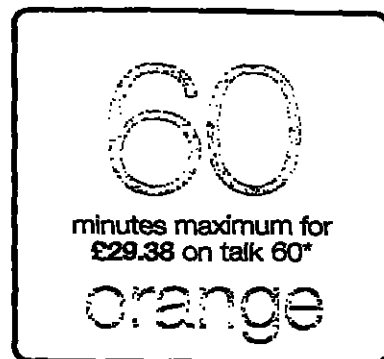
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Holiday firm sees pick-up

First Choice, the third-largest tour operator in the UK, said that there were signs that the slow start to summer holiday bookings was showing signs of picking up, writes John Shepherd.

Despite an increase in sales in recent weeks, however, the company said bookings to the end of March were still down by 17 per cent against last year. Michael Julien, chairman, yesterday told shareholders at the annual meeting: "We have slightly increased our market share for the season and although our cumulative bookings to date are down, our sales mix has benefited from successful product innovations."

Mr Julien said the company was heartened by the cautious approach of the big operators in reducing capacity to reflect lower demand in the early booking period.

"This approach should ensure that, as demand returns, profit margins for summer 1996 can return to a more satisfactory level than last year," he added. The holiday companies suffered badly last year, principally because of over-optimistic forecasts by the industry on how many holidays could be sold and by the long, hot spell of weather in the UK that led to millions staying at home.

First Choice, with Airtours, has been making acquisitions abroad and at home to combat the problems in the UK. The company made three acquisitions last autumn, picking up SkiBound, the remaining 50 per cent of Fiesta West in Canada and the business of JWT in Ireland.

Mr Julien said SkiBound and Fiesta West had traded well.

IN BRIEF

• Cadbury Schweppes said its Trebor Bassett subsidiary had agreed to buy Portfolio Foods, the sugar confectionery and popcorn business that trades as Craven Keiller. Craven's brands include Keiller and Butterkist; it has two manufacturing sites in the UK and employs about 700 people. Net assets at the end of March were £12m.

• FirstBus said Colin Smith, one of its regional directors and one of the original members of the buyout team from Grampian Transport, had decided to leave the company to take up "long standing academic interests and other opportunities". His position as regional director for Scotland will be taken over by Robbie Duncan, who is currently the commercial director.

• Reckitt & Colman said it had sold the personal products division of its US subsidiary to JW Childs Associates for \$123m. In 1995 the division generated trading profits of about \$10m from sales of \$110m.

The net tangible assets of the division amounted to \$30m at the end of December. The proceeds are to be used by Reckitt to reduce debts.

• Archer Group, the insurance broker, said its managing director Ralph Sharp had resigned his directorship of all group companies and was leaving the group. The company said Sharp "has been considering the changes which will occur in the Lloyd's Market in the post reconstruction and renewal period and wishes to be free to pursue a number of opportunities which may arise at that time."

• United News & Media said it had appointed the following additional directors following the announcement on Tuesday that the merger offers for MAI had been declared unconditional: Sir James McKinnon, deputy chairman, Lord Hollick, chief executive, Charles Gregson, director of broking and information, and Roger Laughton, director of broking and entertainment.

There were also three non-executive appointments: Richard Hooper, Sir Michael Lickiss, Christopher Powell and Geoffrey Unwin.

• Division Group, the software house, has reached a deal with EDS under which the American company will resell the British company's virtual reality software in a range of markets round the world, including North America, Europe and the Far East. EDS, one of the leading information services companies in the world, includes most of the Fortune 500 companies among its client list.

• Standard Chartered Bank's stockbroking activities have been sold to Nava Finance, whose largest shareholder is the Thai Military Bank. The consideration of £8.7m buys Standard's operations in Hong Kong, Malaysia, China, Thailand, the UK and the US.

• Greenalls has bought Red Coral Developments, a company which owns five pub-restaurants, for £8.9m in cash. All five pubs, one of which has a lodge, are in Kent and will be operated by Greenalls' Premier House Division.

0971 201520

market report/shares

TAKING STOCK

Investors treated to Easter Parade of bid favourites

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



To the surprise of many observers the stock market put on its own Easter Parade with takeover excitement submerging worries about today's US non-farm payroll figures.

With Whitehall expected to clear the bids for Southern Electric and Midlands Electricity by National Power and PowerGen the hunt was on for other likely targets.

London Electricity, said to be in the sights of Thames Water, surged 20p to 793p - a 50p gain this week - and Yorkshire Electricity rose 15p to 857p, a 44p improvement over the four days.

Speculation continues of further US interest in the sector and it is thought Yorkshire, currently making presentations to its institutional investors, is fearful of a transatlantic strike.

Anticipating bid clearances, NP gained 5p to 492p and PG 6.5p to 549.5p.

The bid excitement helped lift the FT-SE 100 index 30.5 points to 3,755.6; it is only 25.7 from its February peak. The supporting FT-SE 250 index, however, continued to outperform, climbing 25.4 to yet another high, 4,385.3. The market, therefore, treated with splendid indifference today's payroll figures.

Last month they created havoc in New York, sending shares tumbling and, on the principle that when Wall Street sneezes London catches a cold, there was a sharp decline in domestic shares.

But London seemed content with the long holiday wait until Tuesday before it can get to grips with the US data.

Excitement continued in media shares with the market remaining on edge over potential bids and deals. Break-up talk again swirled around Pearson, up 20p to 721p, and Reuters rose 23.5p to 757p on

share buy-back hopes. Reed International gained 20p to 11.64p and United News & Media, where Lord Hollick has moved as chief executive, 18p to 884p. But Thorn EMI gave further ground, off 15p at 1,790p.

Ream, the paper group, added 18p to 403p on talk of a Swiss bid and Hambro, the merchant bank where predators are thought to circle, rose 8p to 251p, largely on bullish comments by its Hambro Insurance Service offshoot, up 10p at 94p.

Granada, celebrated its first Forté sale - 60 hotels to Regal Hotels for £121.7m - with a 22.5p gain to 797p. The

prospect of investment presentations next week also provided a spur. BSkyB jumped 11p to 447p, helped by the Liverpool/Newcastle Ltd television clash which lifted Manchester United 6p to 293p. Carlton Communications rose 16p to 480p.

Emmanuel ignored its debt mountain, gaining 3p to 66p on its record trading last month. Continuing talk of disposals, the well-loved WH Smith 12p to 464p and Great Universal Stores, up 17p to 684p, was thought to be helped by positive comments from Barclays de Zoete Wedd and Cazenove.

Superscape VR, the virtual reality group, was the latest

high-tech share to come down with a bump, crashing 72p to 598p after it warned of increased losses. Firecrest, an internet group, fell 7p to 78p, reflecting the Stock Exchange censure of chief executive, Roy Capper. Sage, as NatWest Securities said buy, improved a further 9p to 404p.

Pizza Express jumped 19p to 344p on suggestions Janus Capital, the US fund which has built an 18.57 per cent stake in the JD Wetherspoon pubs group, had acquired a taste for the pizza chain.

Mid-States, running a car parts operation in the US, held at 39p as Botton International Investments, the vehicle of Irish entrepreneur Dermot Desmond, lifted its interest to 16.06 per cent. Firth, the steel business, was also unchanged at 47p as Malaysian investment fund, Sri Indragaya, nudged its stake to 14.13 per cent.

Ideal Hardware improved 33p to 545p after an agency cross at 530p. Clubbans, the golf group, was the most heavily traded share; there was talk of an institution buying shares at 6.5p. The firm, split from the Ex-Lands property group, has taken a five-year lease to manage Nizels Golf Club near Tonbridge, Kent.

Nurdin & Peacock, the cash and carry group, edged 2p higher to 178p. Figures, due next week, are expected to be disappointing and could prompt a 14 per cent shareholder SHV, a Dutch investment group, to move for control. Last year SHV, which has 60 per cent of the Makro cash and carry business, attempted to gain control by pumping warehouses into N&P in exchange for shares.

Avocat Mining, with interests in gold and tungsten mines, made a quiet debut, closing at 3p above its 240p placing price.

□ The floodgates were opened at Cambridge Water, until recently a statutory company. Its slimmed down shares surged 139.5p to 245p and first-time dealing in the new non-voting shares, handed out as a bonus, produced an opening price of 235p. The reorganisation package for one ordinary share provided a value of almost £108 against the £85 or so price before the change.

□ Sutherland, the Edinburgh stockbroker, is to open in London with Mike Cunnane, formerly with Panmure Gordon, in charge.

□ Stock market turnover last month was a record £68.2bn, beating the January 1994 record of £65bn. AIM turnover was also a peak - £133.4m.

DATA BANK

SE 100 3,755.6
SE 250 4,385.3
SE 350 14.3
VOLUME 1,444,143,143
Index 10.48

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

Shares in focus

Share	Price	Change
London Electricity	793p	+20p
Yorkshire Electricity	857p	+15p
National Power	492p	+5p
PowerGen	549.5p	+6.5p

Alcoholic Beverages			
Guinness	120.00	120.00	0.00
Heineken	110.00	110.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Banks, Merchant			
Barclays	120.00	120.00	0.00
HSBC	110.00	110.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Insurance			
Aviva	120.00	120.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
International			
British Airways	120.00	120.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Engineering Vehicles			
Rolls Royce	120.00	120.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Extractive Industries			
BP	120.00	120.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Breweries, Pubs & Rest			
Asahi	120.00	120.00	0.00
... (many more)	...	...	...
Electricity			
London Electricity	793p	+20p	
Yorkshire Electricity	857p	+15p	
... (many more)	...	...	...
Building/Construction			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Electronics			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Food Manufacturers			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Distribution			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Household Goods			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Investment Companies			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Investment Funds			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Leisure & Hotels			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Life Assurance			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Media			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Pharmaceuticals			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Printing & Paper			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Property			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Retailers, Food			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Retailers, General			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Telecommunications			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Textiles & Apparel			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Transport			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Water			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Support Services			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Rights Issues			
... (many more)	...	...	...
Recent Issues			
... (many more)	...	...	...

THE INDEPENDENT

Win a luxurious weekend break

The Runnymede Hotel, situated on the banks of the Thames, offers guests the utmost in comfort in each of the 171 rooms. The Health and Fitness Spa is outstanding, the facilities include an 18m swimming pool, sauna, gymnasium, and beauty therapy rooms. Two lucky winners, each with one guest, will enjoy a weekend of luxury with full use of all facilities plus a relaxing back massage and mini facial.

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THE RAILTRACK SHARE OFFER. HOW TO REGISTER.

RAILTRACK



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Waters Lunniss, Cambridge, Peterborough	01223 303101
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0171 816 8000

This article is extracted from an Institute of Economic Affairs booklet, Markets and the Media, Competition, Regulation and the Interests of Consumers. Professor Michael Beesley is a founding Professor of Economics at the London Business School.

London Metal Exchange		
LME Stocks		chg
748925	+	7573
83030	+	2680
183675	+	1250
91750	+	600
34406	-	108
8250	-	25
623950	+	850

tick volumes & change in tonnes
from Tue 2 March

Sprink & Con		
	\$	£
Augrands	385/97	252/60
Grass	501/01	55/65
Wares	400/15	262/72
Simple Leaf	385/409	253/68

CMS

\$	Potatoes
£/tonne	ATA Gc2/10kg
5.00	25.00

25.00	Jun	25.4
95	Vol:	495
Cans burned		
Hi-Low	Sens	
422.00-470.50	421.07	
400.00-407.00	459.00	
354.00-345.50	353.25	
<hr/>		
95	FL 100kg	94.0
95	Oil (1) Stompe	94.0
95	Over Oil Stompe	575.9
95	Red 05FL 100kg	90.0
95	Mud Oil Stompe	905.0

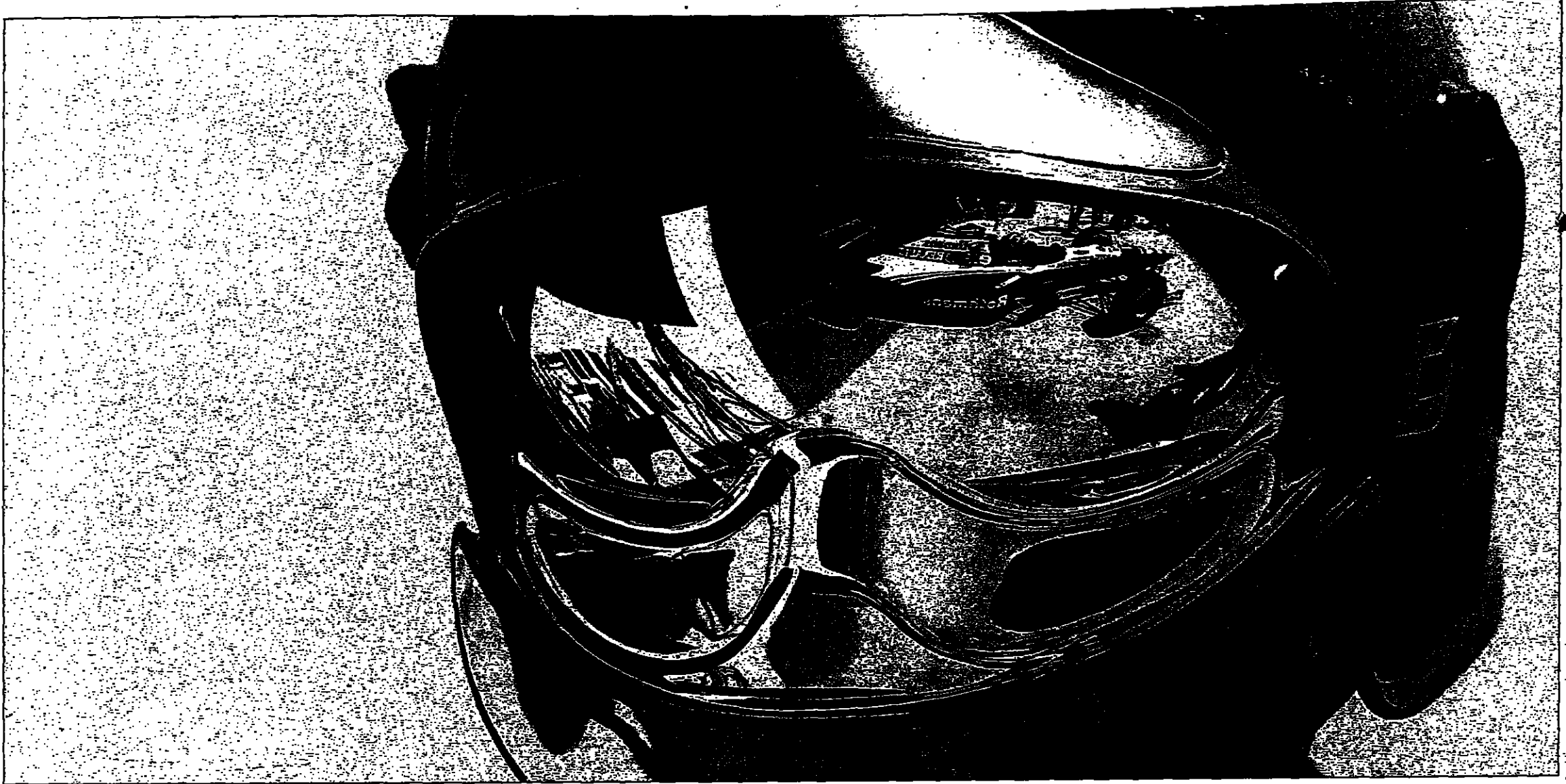
Source: FT Information Services

[illegible]

1 RACING

THE INDEPENDENT

PLAY FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM



WIN a drive in a Grand Prix car

GRAND PRIX '96 RACE SCHEDULE

Argentinian GP
April 7
European GP
April 28
San Marino GP
May 5
Monaco GP
May 19
Spanish GP
June 2
Canadian GP
June 16
French GP
June 30
British GP
July 14
German GP
July 28
Hungarian GP
August 11
Belgian GP
August 25
Italian GP
September 8
Portuguese GP
September 22
Japanese GP
October 13

Formula 1 Dream Team is just like Fantasy Football: you pick and manage your dream grand prix team to score points over the coming season.

Even though the grand prix season has started, it is not too late to join in: pit your wits against other enthusiasts and you could win our overall 1996 champion's prize, a drive in a Formula One car plus additional prizes for each race.

Individual race prizes range from trips to major grands prix, including this year's British Grand Prix at Silverstone, to a day at the Nigel Mansell Racing School at Brands Hatch.

Your team must comprise three drivers, a chassis and an engine; your budget is £40 million. Make your selections from the grand prix shopping list printed below; the only restriction is that your third driver must come from the £1 million category.

Details of how to enter are given on this page. You can enter a team at any point during the grand prix season but the earlier you enter, the greater your chances of being our overall champion. Remember, there are prizes for the winning Dream Team in each individual grand prix so you can enter a different team for each race.

HOW YOU SCORE

Points are awarded per race to the top six finishers, based on the Formula One World Championship points scoring system (10, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1).

but with an extra 10 points awarded to each of the top six finishers. All drivers are eligible to score for a top six finish but can also notch up extra points as follows:

● The fastest driver in race-day warm-up will collect six points, with five for the second and so on down to one point for the sixth quickest.

● Drivers score one point for each place they make up over their grid position. Points are not deducted by losing places.

● Five points are lost if your driver posts first retirement, four for second down to one point lost for the fifth retirement.

● If your driver makes the quickest pit-stop (from the entry of the pitlane to the exit) you gain five points.

● If your driver sets the fastest lap time in the race, you gain five points.

● If your driver receives a stop/go penalty, you lose five points.

● If your driver starts on pole position, you gain five points.

● The Independent will name a Driver Of The Day after each race for a particularly impressive performance, worth five points.

● Non-qualification for a grand prix loses you two points. If a driver is on the FIA's published starting grid but fails to take the start, no points are lost.

● Drivers removed from the results for any reason lose all points gained that weekend. Any driver not competing in a grand prix weekend scores no points.

● Chassis score and lose points in the same way as drivers for a top six finish or an early retirement.

The score is based on the first chassis home of that particular manufacturer. Likewise, only the first chassis retirement will count if they are both among the first five to retire.

● Engine rules are the same as the



DREAM TEAM TOP PRIZE

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points at the end of the Grand Prix Championship season will win our top prize: a drive in a 650bhp F1 car.

You will be flown to the AGS team's training school in the south of France for the most exhilarating experience of your life. The school specialises in F1 courses and provides all the racewear and instruction you will need for the day.

ARGENTINIAN GRAND PRIX PRIZE

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points following the Argentinian Grand Prix on 7 April will win an initial trial at the Nigel Mansell Racing School. Your prize includes instruction laps in a BMW 318i before going out on your own in a Formula 1 first single seater.

Congratulations to Mr K Ridings from Saltfleet-by-Louth, Lincolnshire with his team Big Hill Racing. He has won our Brazilian Grand Prix prize, a VIP trip for two to the San Marino Grand Prix.

chassis rules, without the retirement penalties.

HOW TO ENTER

Choose your Dream Team from the shopping list on this page. Remember, you must choose three drivers (the third from the £1 million section), one chassis and one engine. You must not exceed your budget of £40 million.

Give your team a name and register it by ringing 0891 891 805.

You will immediately be asked the entry question: How many races are there in this year's Formula One World Championship?

To enter your Dream Team details you can use one of two methods.

Method 1 uses a tone phone that lets you key in the code numbers of your driver, chassis and engine choices. The computer will check that your team falls within budget and is eligible.

Method 2 uses a non-tone phone and give your details verbally. A budget check is not possible using this method.

When you have registered your Dream Team, you will be asked to predict the number of points this year's champion will notch up over the year. In case of a tie at the end of the season, the nearest figure to the champion's points will win the top prize. In the event of a further tie, the team that registered first will win.

Once you have registered your team you will be asked for your name, address and telephone number. Your team selections plus your personal details will be played back to you and, when you confirm that they are correct, you will be given a PIN number.

This is confirmation of your entry and will enable you to access the score checking line.

There is no limit on the number of teams an individual can enter, but only one team can be registered per call.

CHECKING YOUR SCORE

You can check your team's position at any time by calling 0891 891 806 and quoting your PIN number. If you want to know the individual driver, chassis and engine scores from the most recent race, call 0891 891 807. This line will also list the Top 50 Formula One Dream Teams.

Rules

1. All telephone calls are charged at 39p per minute cheap rate, 49p per minute at all other times, with a typical call to secure your entry lasting between five and seven minutes.

2. The deadline to be included in a particular race is midday the Friday prior to that race.

3. The judge's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into and there is no cash alternative for prizes.

4. Employees of Newspaper Publishing Plc, Haymarket Publishing Ltd and all associated companies and their families are ineligible.

5. Entrants must be 18 or over and residents of the UK or the Irish Republic.

6. To be eligible for the main prize, you must hold a current driving licence, be no more than 1.95m tall and weigh no more than 70kg.

7. All scores will be worked out according to the official FIA time sheets produced at the meeting. The values stated for drivers, engines and chassis bear no relation to real life.

8. In the event of a tie for the Dream Team Top Prize or for any of the individual race prizes, the team that registered first will win.

9. For lost PIN numbers, call 0891 891 806. Helpline: 01275 344183.

10. The Top 50 Teams Line, lists the top 50 teams from the last race. Both the Team Position Check Line and the Results & Top 50 Teams Line will be updated at 2pm on the Monday following a race.

Make your selection from the Grand Prix Shopping List

DRIVERS

£25m
1 M Schumacher
£23m
2 J Alesi
£20m
3 D Hill
£18m
4 G Berger
£16m
5 D Coulthard
£14m
6 E Irvine
£12m
7 J Villeneuve
£10m
8 M Hakkinen
£8m
9 H H Frentzen
£6m
10 M Brundle

£10m
11 R Barrichello
£8m
12 J Herbert
£6m
13 M Sato
£4m
14 P Lamy
£2m
15 P Dinz
£1m
16 U Matayama
£1m
17 J Verstappen
£1m
18 O Panis
£1m
19 L Badoer
£1m
20 R Rosset
£1m
21 A Montemini

£2m
22 G Fisichella
£2m
23 V Sospit
£2m
24 T Marques
£2m
25 F Lagorce
£2m
26 H Noda
£2m
27 T Inoue
£1m
28 M Blundell
£1m
29 J-C Bouillon
£1m
30 K Brack
£1m
31 K Burt
£1m
32 E Collard
£1m
33 N Fontana
£1m
34 D Franchitti
£1m
35 N Larini

£1m
36 J Magnussen
£1m
37 A Prost
£1m
38 G Targuini
£1m
39 K Wendlinger
Not competing in:
Buenos Aires, Argentina
but they compete later

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£20m
40 Benetton
£18m
41 Williams
£16m
42 Ferrari
£14m
43 McLaren
£12m
44 Sauber
£10m
45 Jordan
£8m
46 Ligier

£6m
47 Tyrrell
£5m
48 Arrows
£3m
49 Minardi
£1m
50 Forti

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59 Ford Zetec
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60 Ford ED-V8

ENTER TODAY

● TEAM POSITION CHECK LINE: 0891 891 806
● RESULTS & TOP 50 TEAMS LINE: 0891 891 807

DREAM TEAM registration: 0891 891 805

0891 891 805

sport

Roe ready for Augusta's ups and downs

April is here and Georgia is on the minds of the world's best golfers. Preparations have entered their final week for the year's first major championship, the US Masters.

Colin Montgomerie, and others, are in action in the Bell South Classic at the Atlanta Country Club. With its hilly, tree-lined fairways and fast greens, conditions are similar to those at Augusta National, only a two-hour drive away.

Nick Faldo has decided to spend time at home on the range – the practice range at Lake Nona, which is also the base for his coach, David Leadbetter.

Considerable fine tuning will be going on under the Florida sun after the 1989 and '90 Masters champion missed the

cut in the Players' Championship last week.

And Mark Roe? Spring has arrived in the Derbyshire Dales, but Roe has yet to venture far from his cottage. He has been hard at work in the kitchen. The cat is wondering when its food bowl will once again contain its regular diet, rather than inedible-looking golf balls.

"The line in here is about the right pace," Roe says of his attempt to recreate the conditions of Augusta's notorious greens. There is no Stimpmeter handy to check, but certainly there will not be a course in the country that currently compares with the top-of-the-scale 12 reading to be found at Augusta. "I like putting on fast greens. I wouldn't think those at Augusta are going to be faster than those at Shim-

The forgotten European in next week's US Masters is honing his game in his Derbyshire kitchen. **Andy Farrell reports**

necock Hills for the US Open last year, or at Valderrama.

"But it is the slopes on the greens that makes Augusta so tricky. I've had a chat with some of the lads who have played there, and they say the art of playing Augusta is to keep the ball under the hole. Barry Lane told me the first time he played there he had a putt from 20 feet behind the hole on one green, and ended up 40 yards off the front."

Last week, Roe played in the Madeira Island Open. On greens with considerable grain, Roe took three putts seven times and four putts once; he

missed the cut by one shot. "I'm still recovering from the trauma," he says. "I have tried 11 different models of Ping putter this week trying to find the right one for Augusta's greens."

The invitation to his first US Masters arrived last Christmas Eve. "I was trying to think who would send me a Christmas card from Augusta." The reply was written out within 20 minutes. He leaves on Saturday and hopes to get in a quiet practice round on Sunday before the hordes arrive from Atlanta.

"I am looking forward to playing my first round there and seeing the place for myself. I

have watched it on television for 20 years. TV flattens the course and takes out the burrows. I naturally hit the ball right-to-left, which you have to do there, so that is not a problem.

"Apparently, it is wide open, there is no rough. It is just important to put yourself in the right position so that you can stay under the hole. That's what I'll have to get a feel for in the practice rounds. But, obviously, you know from TV that the way the course is manicured and the way it is presented is second to none. It looks like heaven on earth too as far as a golfer is concerned."

Roe qualified for what is the most exclusive show in golf by finishing 13th, the top European, in last June's US Open. That performance was a bea-

con in an otherwise desolate season. His marriage broke up and he has recently admitted to being on the verge of suicide.

After finishing 126th on the Order of Merit, he appreciates the irony of the situation. "This is the year I least deserve to go," he says. Still, a top-24 finish would guarantee a return visit next year, and increase TV time for the sunflower he wears in his cap in aid of the Rainbow House charity for terminally ill children.

"My game has slowly been getting better," Roe, who has made one cut in six events, says. "I've abandoned plan 47b and gone back to what I always used to do which is to play with my hands. My head is a lot clearer than it was last year. My per-



Roe: Likes fast greens

sonal problems are sorted out. I'm ready to start playing well again. I can normally pull my game together for the big occasion.

"I am so excited. I am being very careful not to fall or trip over and twist an ankle, or knock an arm. I'm being awfully careful." As he will have to be on those Augusta greens.

Williams attack second target

Derick Allison on the opening of motor sport's most exciting series

Williams' domination of the early stages in the Formula One world championship provides the promoters of "tin-top" racing with further evidence they have the most exciting sport on four wheels.

As the grand prix procession wings its way from Brazil to Argentina this weekend, the freedom fighters of the British Touring Car Championship gather at Donington Park for their first skirmishes of the season on Monday.

Here too, ironically, the Williams-run Renault is highly fancied, but on this track the Anglo-French organisation can anticipate a contest. It is the arena of genuine competition, of wheel-to-wheel, door-banging spectacle, in cars that actually resemble those on the road.

The appeal and potential of this racing are such that FIA, motor sport's governing body, have been moved to get in on the act. They have taken under their wing the International Touring Car Championship, which includes a round at Silverstone in August.

Some have suggested a hidden agenda, that the FIA's underlying motive is to stifle the growth of this precocious child lest it should upstage their number one son.

What is clear is that touring car racing has become a booming business and entertainment industry, and the BBC, shunted off the Formula One circuit from next year by ITV, have made a long-term commitment which will double their coverage of the British Championship and include showing some races live.

Audi joined the entries this season with a formidable CV. They have won German, Italian and French titles, and their German driver, Frank Biela, won the World Cup at the end of last season. More importantly they have been hugely impressive in recent testing.

Another German manufacturer, BMW, have revamped their challenge after a modest showing last year and have a strong driver line-up in Jo Winkelhock, the 1993 champion, and Italy's Roberto Ravaglia. Ford also have a new look to their bid, entrusting the operation with West Surrey Racing, the team that provided Ayrton Senna with his Formula Three equipment in 1983. The established New Zealander, Paul Radisich, is joined by Britain's Steve Roberts.

Honda and Peugeot predict marked improvement in their form this year, while the title holder, John Cleland, accepts that momentum may be some time coming in the Vauxhall Vectra.

Renault suspect their fiercest opposition will come from Volvo, who in turn play down any notion that they might be favourites. Renault's Swiss driver, Alain Menu, intent on adding the individual prize to last season's team award, said: "Lots of people are telling me I'm favourite, but Volvo looks pretty strong and I guess everybody is going to be strong."

The democracy of the BTCC is its strength, and one man who will miss it is the 1994 champion, Alfa Romeo's Gabriele Tarquini. The Italians have pulled out to concentrate on the international championship. Neil Warrior, a spokesman for Alfa said: "The BTCC is a great championship and has been great for us in Britain, but ITC gives us the opportunity to exploit and develop the kind of technology you may not find even in Formula One."

"We feel the ITC, with FIA, will grow and grow. But there is no reason why that should interfere with a thriving British championship, and certainly does not overlap Formula One."

"Any manufacturer needs to concentrate on one or the other. It is very difficult to compete in two to the level required. The important point is that people who love motor racing have plenty of exciting touring car racing to enjoy."

Tarquini says he hopes he and Alfa will be back in Britain when the new Giulietta is up and running. "For me, it's the best championship in Europe," he said. Which is what the men from the BTCC have been saying all along.

BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP: 8 April Donington Park; 22 April Brands Hatch; 5 May Thruxton; 19 May Silverstone; 27 May Oulton Park; 18 June Snetterton; 20 July Silverstone GP; 24 July Silverstone GP; 28 July Thruxton; 11 Aug Oulton Park; 25 Aug Thruxton; 8 Sep Donington; 22 Sep Brands Hatch.

INTERNATIONAL TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP: 24 April Hockenheim (Ger); 12 May Norisring (Ger); 26 May Estoril (Por); 9 June Jerez (Esp); 22 June Norisring (Ger); 7 July Donington (Ger); 21 July Silverstone (GB); 4 Aug Jerez (Esp); 18 Aug Silverstone (GB); 2 Sep Norisring (Ger); 15 Sep Magny Cours (Fr); 29 Sep Mugello (It); 13 Oct Hockenheim.

Ball takes the hard approach

Hugh Matheson meets the Cambridge stroke who will set an aggressive tempo for his crew in tomorrow's Boat Race

James Ball, the stroke of the Cambridge crew which will race for its fourth successive Beefeater Trophy tomorrow afternoon, will attract attention for leading the crew from bow side, and for taking the seat from last year's winning stroke, Miles Barnatt.

However, he may be the key difference in a remarkably

even race. "He doesn't know how good he is," said several of the Light Blue coaching team, before discussing his high power to weight ratio and fluid rhythm.

He divided his time at King's School, Chester, between rowing on the river Dee and surfing at various points on the north Wales coast. Rowing, where you are in a crew of eight people who are entirely dependent on one another, oddly, gave him fewer opportunities for a social life than surfing – where it is dangerous to be alone.

"It's best on the sunny days when there's a big low, out in the Atlantic, putting the waves in," he said. "You sit out in the deep chatting to friends, then

paddle a few strokes and pick up the swell that turns into a wave that carries you for 30 to 50 seconds. Then you paddle back out with the help of a rip tide and tell tall tales of how good it was."

His crew nickname is "Billy No-friends" but the Cambridge president, John Carver, says:

"He's actually quite popular. It's just that he's happy on his own, particularly when training."

Key Whyman, the coxswain, was a year behind Ball at school. "He was more one of the lads then," Why-

man said. "Now he can sit on the minibus to Ely for 25 minutes with his head in a book, while the locker-room talk revolves around him, and never say a word."

Ball has exploded innumerable times when things go wrong. In the January training camp in Spain, there was some confusion over the finish point of a race and, after explaining the coaches' breeding to them in a volley of swearwords, he asked if they thought he was doing this for fun. Perversely,



Cambridge's James Ball in training this week. 'He doesn't know how good he is,' say his coaches

Photograph: Robert Hallam

they liked this as evidence of his aggressive racing personality and put him at stroke.

This engaging talker is a highly concentrated person who is prepared for big sacrifices when he has set himself a target. After finishing fourth at the Junior World Championships, in a coxed four, he gave up

rowing for his year off and went to California and Bali with the surfboard.

On his return to Cambridge he opted to row and started training a week before the start of his first term. "I missed all the fresher's 'get to know you' stuff. Luckily I stayed friends with a few people I met early on, but I missed a hefty slice of social life: in bed early, just training and working. In the second year you can make compromises."

"When I arrived I was well down on fitness and faced the chop several times but hung on

and, at the end of the first term, I thought there was an outside chance of the Blue Boat." He did not make it but won the reserves' race in the Goldie crew by 14 lengths and, more crucially, went on, after summer rowing, to win the trials for the Under-23 World Championships.

He professes no clear ambition and, when he went to the Netherlands, the crew was anxious only to avoid last place in the final. "We got faster each race but only when we took the lead at half-way did I believe we could win," he said. He is credited with holding the crew

together and driving it over the last 1,000m to win the gold by 0.2sec.

He is slowly acknowledging that he might have further to go. "I would go to senior trials with low expectations but if a vest looked likely I'd go for it – and the same would no doubt be true if a medal was in prospect." His doubts of his ability are more likely to be the defensive reactions to the possibility of failure than to a genuine shortcoming.

Off the water, Ball is a throwback to the first hundred years of the event, which produced eight bishops. He is reading

theology at Robinson College – but he is keen to make clear that theology these days is much more comparative religion and philosophy than vocational training for an English parish and, as this implies, he is in closer touch with his emotions than God.

He is not clear about what he would like to do. He is not drawn to the City "which has become a bit of a thing for Cambridge Blues." What a future employer will get is a highly motivated self-consciously disciplined achiever, long on deeds and short on small talk.

Clubs slide closer to schism

Rugby Union
DAVID LLEWELLYN

The split no one wants is widening between the Rugby Football Union and England's top clubs. With just 32 days remaining before the moratorium on professionalism is lifted on 6 May the two sides are no nearer agreement. The mood in the clubs' camp has swung from disappointment to anger in the last two weeks.

That anger could manifest itself in the long-threatened breakaway, even though the top clubs' official body, English First Division Rugby Limited and their Second Division equivalent insist that is not at all what they want. "There is no way we want to break away," says the EFDR chairman, Donald Kerr. "We are trying to be

constructive, trying to be realistic. The breakdown of discussions concerns us much more than a possible breakaway."

Newcastle's chairman, Sir John Hall, is confident there will be no breakaway. "Common sense will prevail if everybody cares for rugby, as they say they do," he said.

But EFDR were angered by the RFU's executive committee chairman, Cliff Brittle, insisting that Twickenham retains full control of running the game, including television negotiations. The seal of rugby was not for sale, Brittle insisted at the weekend, when the senior clubs from the First and Second Divisions boycotted the last round of talks.

The clubs maintain that by going forward together they will have a far stronger hand

when it comes to negotiating broadcasting rights. Sir John does not want rugby to undersell itself. He heads the Second Division clubs' body and having had experience of the teething troubles when football set up its Premiership – which rugby is adopting as a blueprint – he does not want rugby to make the same mistakes.

Unfortunately the only talks planned for the moment are informal, again not what the clubs want. They are in a position of strength having already set up an administrative structure, European Rugby Clubs Ltd, which encompasses the Five Nations as well as Italy. And if agreement cannot be reached in time then English Professional Rugby Union Clubs Ltd, who represent the First and Second Division members would reluctantly go ahead and negoti-

ate their own sponsorship and television deals for a playing structure which would guarantee clubs the necessary 15 or 16 home matches they need to support wage-bills ranging from £750,000 to £1.5m.

That of course would mean that all the top players would have commitments elsewhere leaving the RFU without any assets, since, as the clubs point out, the Five Nations' Championship is the chief source of Twickenham's revenues, and without the big-name players there would be little to tempt the television companies and sponsors. As one EPRUC official put it recently, "We have a loaded gun, but we do not want to pull the trigger."

There is definitely a gun being held at the head of the game, the question is, whose hand is on it?

Stimpson opts to join Andrew at Newcastle

The harsh facts of new-age rugby could not have been better illustrated than yesterday, when Newcastle got their man and Moseley did not, writes David Llewellyn. The reason of course is money.

Newcastle's director of rugby, Rob Andrew, secured the signature of West Hartlepool's full-back Tim Stimpson, who has impressed at England A level, but their Second Division colleagues

Moseley appeared to have lost out to Orrell in the race to sign the former All Black stand-off Frano Botica, who plays rugby league for Castleford.

Stimpson's move deeper into

the North-east involved a lot of soul searching on the part of the West Hartlepool captain. "It's a very exciting prospect," Stimpson, 22, said last night. "Of all the clubs I could have joined I feel Newcastle will be extremely competitive next year in the Second Division. And I feel they will become a major force in the game in years to come."

Andrew said: "This is a very important signing for us. Tim has had an outstanding season with England A. A lot of clubs have been after him, but I've been after him right from the word go. It's been a difficult decision for him, he feels a sense of respon-

sibility to West. It's a decision he has thought about very carefully."

Stimpson, who captained Durham University, will stay at Brierton Lane until the end of the season, although how often he turns out depends on how quickly he recovers from a rib injury sustained in the Hong Kong Sevens last weekend. He certainly misses Orrell's visit to West tomorrow.

Orrell had to outbid Moseley, who had reportedly offered £40,000 to Botica, and Peter Williams. Moseley's director of rugby, admitted: "We have been talking to Frano for quite a while, but so have a lot

of other clubs. Orrell have made him a substantial offer, possibly for two years, and he is thinking things over."

Moseley have decided not to increase their offer and are resigned to losing out. "We haven't heard from Frano yet but I would presume that at some stage he will give me a call to say he has accepted Orrell's offer," Moseley's playing director, Barrie Corless said. "We are not going to get involved in a Dutch auction. Orrell have offered him more than we have and, if the figures we have heard are accurate, we don't even get to the start line."

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Photograph: Adam Scott

the grand stage

"There's always an element of a gamble with new players," said Jim Jefferies, the Hearts manager, who was responsible for bringing Bruno to Scotland in February.

land. "There was no transfer fee involved and at the time we were bottom of the league. We were now fourth and in a cup semi-final, so it was a good deal for us. He has brought a coolness to the defence and what was a tense situation. He has composure and confidence with an exceptional positional sense."

"You don't play 98 times for Juventus and 103 times for Torino without being a good player. He's a real athlete who can shake the kids here how to look after themselves," says Jefferies, and every Hearts supporter will be more than happy if Bruno can look after the young and the not-so-young players around him on the Hampden turf tomorrow afternoon.

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SPORT

GEORGIA ON HIS MIND

Mark Roe looks to the Masters 30

BOAT RACE

Cambridge's lone stranger 30

Keegan's philosophy faces reality test

Football
GLENN MOORE

Easter is traditionally the time when championship pretenders, like so many chocolate eggs, are exposed as hollow, the promise of the packaging let down by the substance.

After Wednesday's dramatic defeat at Anfield the suspicion grows that Newcastle will be thus revealed and their delightful but lightweight team will be surpassed by the heavyweights of Liverpool and Manchester United. After conceding 11 goals and gaining one point in their last four away games, Kevin Keegan's recital of the manager's mantra - "there is a long way to go" - sounded as if it should have been accompanied by a rendition of "We'll support you ever more", supporters' customary lament to brave defeat.

That feeling hardened when it was revealed, yesterday, that Steve Howey's season could be over. Howey damaged a hamstring eight minutes from the end of Newcastle's 4-3 defeat at Anfield. Salt on the wounds for Keegan, who appears to have enough defensive problems already, even if Darren Peacock is a ready-made replacement.

But... go back a year and a day. On April 4 1995, a Chris Sutton goal at Loftus Road put Blackburn Rovers eight points clear of Manchester United at the top of the Premiership. There were six matches to go. The title race, said everybody, was settled.

Not quite. It was another seven weeks before Rovers staggered across the finishing line, and even then the championship

was only concluded in their favour because Andy Cole had left his finishing touch on Tyne-side.

Keegan, like Roy Evans and Alex Ferguson, has been in enough championship chases to

know there is enough time for Newcastle to win it. He also has the personality to convince his players of that. The question is, has he been involved in enough title races as a manager to guide his team to triumph?

Judging by his pledge to carry on attacking, one wonders. "We shall go on playing this way, playing the same sort of players, or I will go," he said after Anfield. "If we do not win anything, so be it."

Brave words, to be applauded by anyone who likes enterprising football, but is it realistic? Roy Evans, a more pragmatic man, did not think so. While Keegan raved about the game, he morosely observed:

"There was a lot of kamikaze defending. You cannot win the championship playing like that."

Evans recognised that Liverpool had "got away with playing one against two, one against one, at the back," but his mood indicated that he did not see it becoming club policy.

Liverpool were attacked down the centre, where the pace of Les Ferdinand and Fernando Asprilla exposed the unusual lack of cover. This was once regularly the case with Newcastle but the acquisition of David Batty stiffened that area, instead they were vulnerable on the flanks. With tackling back not in the David Ginola repertoire on one wing, and Keith Gillespie missing on the other, Newcastle's full-backs are often exposed, a problem made worse by their preference for attacking.

Keegan, despite his bold words, has compromised once in bringing in David Batty. He may need to do so again to protect the flanks. If he does, we will not find out tomorrow, when Queen's Park Rangers are likely to suffer a backlash at St James' Park, but on Monday, when Newcastle visit Ewood Park.

Defeat there and the dream may really be over. Liverpool and Manchester United do not look as if they are going to drop many points in their run-ins. However, the pressure is now on them and, although Ferguson has been there before, some of his younger players have not. Liverpool are even less experienced as only John Barnes, of Wednesday's starting line-up, knows what it is like to be a champion. It is a rare feeling...

HOW THE CHAMPIONSHIP RACE HAS UNFOLDED														
Premiership Table								Liverpool				Liverpool 6 Apr: Coventry (a), 8 Apr: West		
Monday 8 January								3 April				Horn (h), 18 Apr: Everton (a), 27 Apr: Manchester City (h), 1 May: Arsenal (a), 5 May: Manchester City (h)		
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts							
Newcastle	22	15	3	3	42	18	48	Newcastle	36	25	7	4	73	30
Man Utd	22	11	5	5	40	20	38	Man Utd	36	22	8	6	66	24
Liverpool	22	11	5	5	40	20	38	Liverpool	35	19	10	7	57	37
Premiership Table								Remaining fixtures				1994/95 Premiership		
Today								Newcastle 6 Apr: QPR (h), 8 Apr: Blackburn (h), 14 Apr: Aston Villa (h), 27 Apr: Southampton (h), 29 Apr: Leeds United, 2 May: Nottingham Forest (a), 5 May: Tottenham (h), Manchester United 6 Apr: Man City (a), 8 Apr: Coventry (h), 33 Apr: Southampton (h), 17 Apr: Leeds United (h), 25 Apr: Arsenal (h), 5 May: Manchester City (h)				Today		
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts							
Man Utd	32	20	7	5	59	30	67	Newcastle	42	27	8	7	86	39
Newcastle	31	20	4	7	58	32	64	Man Utd	42	26	10	6	77	28
Liverpool	32	18	8	6	54	30	62	Liverpool	42	22	11	9	72	43
Top Three's last 10 matches								Manchester United 6 Apr: Man City (a), 8 Apr: Coventry (h), 33 Apr: Southampton (h), 17 Apr: Leeds United (h), 25 Apr: Arsenal (h), 5 May: Manchester City (h)				Today		
Manchester United								Manchester United 6 Apr: Man City (a), 8 Apr: Coventry (h), 33 Apr: Southampton (h), 17 Apr: Leeds United (h), 25 Apr: Arsenal (h), 5 May: Manchester City (h)				Today		
24 Mar	Spurs (h)	W	1-0					24 Mar	Spurs (h)	W	1-0			
20 Mar	Arsenal (h)	W	1-0					20 Mar	Arsenal (h)	W	1-0			

Ajax plot fightback

Ajax were quick to warn Panathinaikos against premature celebration after the Greeks' 1-0 victory in Amsterdam on Wednesday in the first leg of their European Cup semi-final.

The European champions wasted wave after wave of attacks and allowed the Greeks to snatch a precious 1-0 away win with a goal from the Polish striker Krzysztof Warzycha four minutes from time. It was set up by a surging 30-yard solo run from their fleet-footed winger Yorgos Donis, who slipped the ball through to Warzycha to score.

Louis van Gaal, the Ajax coach, stressed: "Ajax has, in the past, won its away games. You shouldn't start cheering too soon." Juan Ramon Rocha, Panathinaikos' Argentine coach, concurred: "We are a step closer to the final in Rome but at this level the home advantage plays a small role, especially against a team like Ajax. But it was a great night for Greek soccer."

The victory sparked celebrations in Athens where thousands of fans took to the streets for a night-long party with champagne and fireworks. Waving club and Greek flags, the fans brought the city alive, blaring car horns and dancing in central squares and streets.

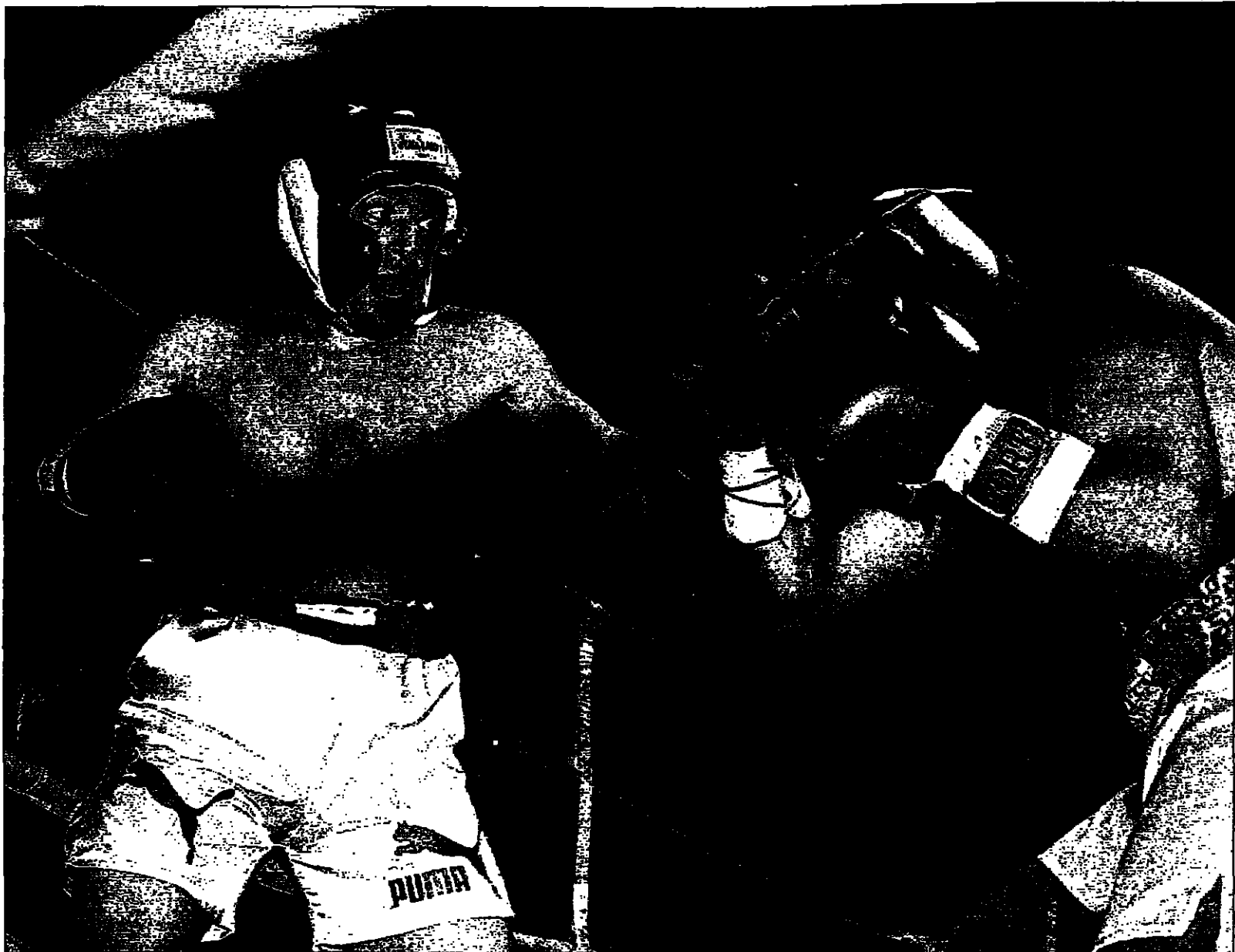
The other semi-final reached its expected outcome with Juventus beating 10-man Nantes 2-0 to stay on course for next month's final.

The French side were hindered by the dismissal of midfielder Bruno Carotti on the stroke of half-time for his second bookable offence. The defender Serge Le Dizet will also miss the home leg after picking up a second-half booking.

Gianluca Vialli, widely expected to leave Juventus when his contract expires at the end of the season, took advantage by breaking the deadlock with a close-range glancing shot in the 50th minute after Pietro Vierchowod fired the ball into the area.

The Yugoslav midfielder Vladimir Jugovic doubled Juventus' lead in the 66th minute with a powerful shot from the edge of the area.

The German federation has proposed that payments to a central pool which would benefit all professional clubs should replace transfer fees for out-of-contract players. The federation's league committee made the proposal to a meeting of the country's 36 professional clubs on Tuesday. The committee proposed a transitional transfer system should operate next season and the new pool system would be in place for 1997/98.



Hand of prod: Diego Maradona (left) takes on Falucho Laciari in a charity fight in Cordoba, Argentina

Photograph: Glenn Cratty/Allsport

Arrival of Beto 'unlikely'

The arrival of a third Brazilian, Beto, at Middlesbrough, who face Sheffield Wednesday in the Premiership today, is looking far from certain. Bryan Robson was said to be in the advanced stages of landing the Botafogo striker, but the coach, John Pickering, said: "Beto has been mentioned in general conversation but not as an immediate target. I'm not saying he will not come, but I'd be surprised if he did."

Manchester United could be forced to pay Oldham over £500,000 if the schoolboy David Brown makes the grade. A Football League commission has ruled that United must pay Oldham £75,000 following a decision that they had broken the rules when they signed him.

United would have to pay a further £25,000 if Brown makes five first-team appearances followed by £100,000 after 25 appearances. Another £25,000 will be due if Brown is capped at England Under-21 level and £100,000 if he plays a full international.

Gerry Francis, the Tottenham manager, has admitted Darren Anderton's chances of playing again this season are growing more remote after Anderton, who hoped to play a full reserve match against West Ham on Tuesday, pulled out after suffering a stomach strain in training.

Aston Villa are to offer a new contract to Paul McGrath, their 36-year-old central defender, who has been with the club seven years and will be entitled to a free transfer. "Paul has earned the right to do what he wants to but he knows and I know that there will be an offer," Brian Little, the Villa manager, said.

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No 2953, Friday 5 April By Mace

Thursday's solution

ACROSS

- Season? One gorging overlooks pinch of fennel (6)
- Fits birds circling river (6)
- Expert in housecraft? (15)
- Nick's belt (5)
- Fiddle with one new ridge (inverted, before) (9)
- Love's adorned with elegant Eastern flower (6)
- Back the Queen's in handicap (6)
- Fellow in a rigid state (6)
- Alternating switch? (3-3)
- Advocate stone wall outside (9)

DOWN

- Bring to light former puzzle? ... (6)
- ... Frank finds it easy (15)
- Slur, one cutting doyen no end (5)
- Sort out back, and sweep (9)

Not the ideal containers for bulbs (7,8)

Sulphur's liable to separate (6)

Moderate university politician, I note? (6)

Take hold of the bit (6)

Sparks off drills (9)

Old slab of cork, say, floating on river (6)

Give, as well (6)

Calculating sort, one American, holding vehicle up (6)

Line for tenor (6)

Girl employed in the French bank (5)

Big selection of selectors

Cricket
DAVID LLEWELLYN

And then there were nine. The queue for the two vacancies on the England selection committee grew to unprecedented proportions, turning the midnight deadline on Wednesday into the "whitching" hour. The former Test players Geoff Miller and Chris Cowdrey were added to the list which now reads: Ian Botham, David Graveney, Fred Titmus, Brian Bolus, John Edrich, Kim Barnett, Graham Gooch, Miller and Cowdrey.

Miller was the choice of Hampshire and immediately prompted their chief executive, Tony Baker, a member of the Test and County Cricket Board's executive committee, to query the way the election will now be run. Baker said: "It could be an embarrassing election, as I don't think the first-past-the-post system is ideal when there are as many as nine

candidates to choose from. But part of the problem is that this situation has not arisen before. I'm not criticising, but it could have been better if there were a two-tier system for reaching the final two selections."

Questions still remain about Botham's media commitments. Gooch and Barnett's playing duties and Graveney's opposition to Illingworth in last month's abortive chairman-of-selectors contest. Lord's yesterday stressed that a circular to counties sent out by the Test and County Cricket Board chief executive, Alan Smith, had been designed merely to give guidance rather than to comment unfavourably on Botham's potential clash of interests with his media work. "Alan was certainly not trying to put the block on anyone," the TCCB spokesman, Richard Little, said.

Lord's stipulated midnight on 17 April as the deadline for the postal ballot, so the counties

now have the best part of a fortnight to settle down and consider logically who would be best suited to the selectors' duties. However, the prospect of confusion, and a possible second ballot, looms after the result of the voting is made public on 18 April.

Each of the 18 first-class counties, plus MCC and the Minor Counties, have two votes, which means a total of 40 must be cast. Theoretically, just six votes may be enough to earn someone the job, but it is more likely the second and third places could end in a tie.

In that case, a second ballot between those contenders would be needed, with the candidates who received most votes in the first place being automatically selected. But, given the general confusion which seems to shroud English cricket at present, it is just as likely that more than two candidates could dead-end at the top of the voting table.

Hill puts priority on qualifying

Motor racing

Damon Hill believes the qualifying sessions will be even more important than usual as he attempts to claim his third victory in as many grands prix this season in the Argentine event on Sunday.

The Williams' driver won the opening grand prix in Melbourne last month and followed that by sneaking to success in the Brazilian Grand Prix at Sao Paulo last weekend.

Victory in Sunday's 72-lap race at the 4.259km Oscar Alfredo Gálvez circuit, where he won last season, would give him a comfortable advantage over his rivals before the Formula One series switches to the European season at the Nürburgring in Germany on 28 April. "It is a circuit on which it is difficult to pass," Hill said, "but it is certainly a fun track to

drive on as well. The main thing is that it is vital to try and get a good grid position."

Hill has been relaxing with his wife, Georgie, on the Brazilian coast since his victory last Sunday. There was no such luxury for his Williams team-mate, Jacques Villeneuve, who spun off in the treacherous wet conditions. The Canadian is determined to atone for that mistake in Argentina and emulate his impressive debut display in Australia, when he finished second.

"I am hoping for a dry race, obviously," he said. "I have not had much experience of wet weather racing and that was a disadvantage for me in Brazil. It was only my second time."

The two Williams men expect their biggest challenge to come once again from the Benetton team's Jean Alesi, who was second in Brazil, and the world champion, Michael Schumacher,

in a Ferrari. Schumacher was third in Brazil.

The tight and technical circuit is likely to bring into contention several teams who cannot match those three for power, including the Tyrrells of Finland's Mika Salo and his Japanese team-mate, Ukyo Katayama.

The Jordans of the Brazilian, Rubens Barrichello, who looked certain to finish in the points until he spun off in Brazil, and Martin Brundle are also likely to play major parts this weekend.

However, Johnny Herbert, who drives for Sauber, thinks Hill has merely to keep his head to take the world title. "He just hasn't got a threat out there," he said. "Probably his only danger is his team-mate, Jacques, because the Williams is easily the best car this year."

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